

By MARTHA FINLEY.
AUTHOR OF
— THE — ELSIE BOOKS.



The
JOHN SKALLY TERRY
MEMORIAL COLLECTION



ESTABLISHED BY
THE FAMILY IN HONOR OF
JOHN S. TERRY
CLASS OF 1918

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARY

Library
School



10003058209

431

Innumerable have been the
crimes committed in the name
of religion.

Of those who religious
motives have been used
as a cover for the most
for crimes against humanity to
begeth them all. It is
the devil's religion, and
we.

That is why
to find yet another religion
in which to put the
in the hands of the



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

CASELLA

OR

THE CHILDREN OF THE VALLEYS.



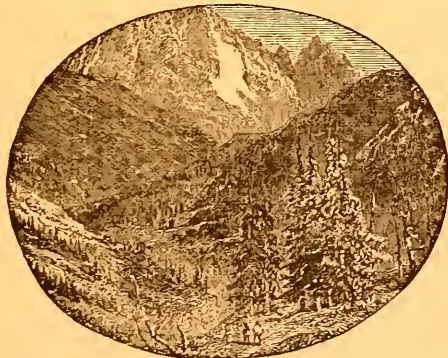
CASELLA

OR

THE CHILDREN OF THE VALLEYS.

BY *Finley*
MARTHA (FARQUHARSON),

AUTHOR OF "MARION HARVIE," "ANNANDALE," "THE SHANNONS," "ELSIE
DINSMORE," "HOLIDAYS AT ROSELANDS," ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK:
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY,
PUBLISHERS.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1868, by

J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for
the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Propaganda, of which frequent mention is made in the course of my narrative, was a society established at Rome, in 1622, by Pope Gregory XV., for the purpose of propagating the Romish faith. Its original title was "Congregatio de Propaganda Fide;" but in 1650 it added the further designation, "et extirpandis hereticis." Muston tells us that it "made rapid progress, at that period, not only in Italy, but in France; having especial councils in all the towns of those countries." "The councils," he says, "were composed of both laymen and ecclesiastics; and, there being plenary indulgence for all Propagandists, women also took part in the proceedings, so that there were councils of men and councils of women. At Turin, where the institution became established (31st of May, 1650) under the distinguished sanction of a royal ordinance, the male council was presided over by the Archbishop of the city, and by the Marquis di San Tommaso; and the female by the Marchioness di Pianeza, who thus

sought, in a mistaken religious zeal, to expiate the sins of a dissipated youth.

“ Every means was resorted to by the Propagandists to achieve the aims of their society. ‘ The lady Propagandists,’ writes Leger, ‘ distributed the towns into districts, and each visited the district assigned to her twice a week; suborning simple girls, servant-maids, and young children, by their flattering allurements and fair promises, and doing evil turns to such as would not listen to them. They had their spies everywhere, who, among other information, ascertained in what Protestant families domestic disagreements existed; and hither would the Propagandists repair, stirring up the flame of dissension in order to separate the husband from the wife, the wife from the husband, and children from their parents; promising them, and, indeed, giving them, great advantages, if they would consent to attend mass. Did they hear of a tradesman whose business was falling off, or of a gentleman who from gambling or otherwise was in want of money, these ladies were ever at hand, with their *dabo tibi*, on the condition of apostasy; and the prisoner was in like manner released from his dungeon, who would give himself up to them.’

“To meet the very heavy expenses of this proselytizing, to keep the machinery at work to purchase the souls who sold themselves for bread, regular collections were made in the chapels and in private families, in the shops, in the inns, in the gambling-houses, in the streets—everywhere was alms-seeking in operation for the extirpation of heresy. The Marchioness di Pianeza herself, great lady as she was, used every second or third day to make a circuit in search of subscriptions, even going into the taverns for that purpose. Twice a week the councils assembled to receive an account of what the members had respectively done, to consult what measures should next be taken, and to arrange for securing the aid, where necessary, of the secular arm; an aid, for that matter, never refused to them. The councils in the market towns were in subordination to those of the metropolitan towns; these, to those of the capital; and these, to that of Rome, the great spider that held the threads of all this mighty web.

“Another *modus operandi* adopted was the establishment, at Luserna, Pignerol, and Perrier, of pawnbroker-shops, to which the distressed Waldenses eagerly resorted. Confiscations, the continuous billeting of troops upon them for the last few years, defi-

cient harvests, and several tremendous conflagrations had gradually reduced the Waldenses to the last stage of penury. These establishments supplied the wretched population with corn, clothing, money, on the security of their houses, furniture, land. When a Waldensian was known to have in this way pledged his last resource to save his family from famine, the Propagandists would come to him, offering full and free restitution of all he had pledged, and quittance for the amount borrowed, on condition of his entering the Romish Church; or they would have him first thrown into prison for the debt, and then assail him with their treacherous proposals.

“These means were effective with a few,” continues Muston; “but the work was found to proceed too slowly;” and then he goes on to tell of the death of the Marchioness di Pianeza, and of her dying charge to her husband to labor for the conversion of the Waldenses, and that he undertook to do so by fire and sword, the work being begun by the carrying out of Gastaldo’s edict on the 25th of January, 1655.

It is just here my story opens. I think it hardly deserves the name of fiction; for it has been, throughout, my earnest endeavor to make it a true pic-

ture of life in the valleys at that period, and of the Christian patience and heroism and the forgiving, forbearing spirit of those dear people of God, and to show how the precious truths of the gospel sustained them amid all their fearful sufferings. Many of my characters are imaginary; yet I think I may say they are true types of hundreds who lived and suffered then and there; nor have I carried them through any trials but such as really fell to the lot of very many of the Waldenses in those days, nor through any scenes but such as were enacted again and again in their valleys; while in describing the battles, the wonderful exploits of Gianavel and Giaheri, and indeed in everything concerning the community at large, I have adhered strictly to the facts as I have found them recorded in history.

Should my little work be received with favor, and life and health be spared me, it is my intention to take up this same family again about the time of the revocation of the edict of Nantes—some fifteen years after the close of this story—and carry them through the succeeding persecution, the exile, and the return. I have chosen this manner of treating my subject in preference to confining myself to the bare facts as they

stand recorded in history ; because I think it is much easier for almost any one to feel deep interest and sympathy for individuals than for a whole people taken together, with no one of whom can we feel ourselves really acquainted. But I hope my story may so interest my readers in the Waldenses that they will desire to know more of them, and, if unacquainted with their history, will at once seek to inform themselves fully upon the subject by examining the authentic accounts which have been published from time to time.

For my historical facts, and other needed information in regard to this interesting people, I am much indebted to Muston's "Israel of the Alps;" "The Waldenses ; or Protestant Valleys of Piedmont," by William Beattie, M.D.; to Morland's History, to Gilly's works, and, in a lesser degree, to the history by William Jones, and a number of smaller books.

M F.

CASELLA;

OR,

THE CHILDREN OF THE VALLEYS.

CHAPTER I.

"Yes, go thou to the hamlet vales
Of the Alpine mountains old,
If thou wouldst hear immortal tales
By the wind's deep whispers told!
Go, if thou lov'st the soil to tread
Where man hath bravely striven,
And lifelike incense hath been shed,
An offering unto heaven !

"Far o'er the snows and round the pines
Hath swept a noble flood ;
The nurture of the peasant's vines
Hath been the martyr's blood !
A spirit stronger than the sword,
And loftier than despair,
Through all the heroic region pour'd,
Breathes in the generous air."

THE hamlet of Casella stood on the heights of San Giovanni, its half-dozen cottages nestling picturesquely nere and there among the rocks and trees. In one of them, the second as you climbed the ascent from the vale below, lived Hubert and Madalena Romano, with their aged mother and two sweet babes.

Their cottage, with the chestnut and mulberry trees

whose overhanging branches almost concealed it from view in the summer-time, a cow, a yoke of oxen, a vineyard on the slope of the hill, and a little field made to yield its harvests of grain by the most unwearied industry, were all their worldly possessions; and even these, they well knew, might at any time be snatched from them by the strong hand of oppression. Yet; putting their trust in God, and laying up their chief treasure in Heaven, they passed a life of peace and quiet contentment. The cottage was built of rough stone, with a gallery in front sheltered by the roof, which, in the Swiss style, projected some distance beyond the walls; and here, in pleasant weather, when his day's work was done, Hubert loved to sit with his little family about him, enjoying the pure sweet mountain air, and the beauty of the landscape spread out before them,—for the view from this spot was very fine. At their feet lay a rich and fertile plain, with its pretty little villages scattered here and there amid fruit-trees, vineyards, and fields of waving grain, and its verdant meadows sloping gently down to the waters of the Pelice; while beyond the river was the town of Luserna, standing upon an eminence, and backed by mountains rising in abrupt masses, here clothed with dense forests, and sprinkled with hamlets and isolated dwellings, there soaring upward in sterile sublimity, the peaks of the loftiest capped with perpetual snow, and the glittering pinnacle of Monte Viso, far away to the southwest, rising high above them all.

Back of the cottage, to the north and west, might be seen the smiling hills and dales of Roccapiatta, the towering sides of La Vachera, the heights of Roccamanante, and the lovely valley of Angrogna, with its

fertile mountains, its hanging woods, rushing streams, and rustic hamlets.

Indeed, on every side the scenery was grandly beautiful, whether clothed in summer's verdure, or, as at the opening of my story, dressed in its winter robes of ice and snow.

Clouds had obscured the sun the livelong day, and now the shades of evening were fast gathering over the landscape, as Madalena looked anxiously from the cottage window, then turned away with a heavy sigh. A sad foreboding oppressed her. Early that morning her husband had gone to La Tour, expecting to be at home again by noon; and now night was coming on, and the evening meal stood ready upon the table, and still he came not. "Where was he?—what had befallen him?" she asked herself, as she took her babe in her arms, and sat down on a low seat by the fire to await his coming. She trembled and shuddered, and her heart grew sick with fear as she remembered how often the followers of their persecuted faith had been seized upon the slightest pretense, thrown into dungeons, tortured, and put to death.

She pressed her babe closer to her bosom, and a tear rolled silently down her cheek and fell upon its face, while the agonized cry of her heart went up: "O Lord God of Israel, protect and bless my beloved husband—my Hubert! Oh, bring him safely home to me and to these helpless babes!"

"Hubert is late to-night," said a gentle voice at her side. It was Barbara Romano who spoke, Hubert's aged mother, who had always shared their home, and who was scarcely less dear to her son's wife than to himself.

Madalena looked up, seeming about to speak, but her lip quivered, and no words came.

"Do not be disheartened, my dear daughter," said the old lady, gently laying her hand on Madalena's shoulder. "We know not what may have detained him, but let us not anticipate trouble. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' Let us put our trust in the Lord, and stay ourselves upon the mighty God of Jacob."

"Hark!" exclaimed Madalena, starting to her feet. "Surely that was his step!" And even as she spoke the door opened, and Hubert stood before them.

Madalena's heart gave one joyous bound, then sank again like lead in her bosom, as a glance at her husband's face told her that he was the bearer of evil tidings. A dread silence seemed to have fallen upon them all, and no one spoke while Hubert secured the door, shook the snow from his hair and clothes—for the clouds that had been all day lowering in the sky were now sending down their fleecy shower upon mountain, hill, and valley—and threw aside his outer garments. Then drawing near the silent, expectant women, he stood between them, passing an arm round each; but still no words fell from his lips, though Madalena's eyes sought his face with wistful, eager questioning.

"Hubert," whispered his mother, at last, "you bring us evil tidings; but let us hear them at once; for we would know the worst."

"Yes, mother," he said, "the storm that has so long threatened has burst upon us at last: the Council of the Propaganda has prevailed upon the duke to decree the immediate carrying out of the edict of May 15th, 1650,

and to-day Gastaldo has issued an order that all the Vaudois families domiciled in the communes of Luserna and Lusernella, Fenile, Campiglome, Bubiana, Briche-rasco, San Segonza, San Giovanni, and La Tour, shall remove themselves into the valley and confines of Bobbi, Villar, Angrogna, and Borata, the only places in the valley in which his highness will now tolerate our religion; and this in the space of three days, under pain of death and confiscation of goods."

Madalena's face grew white as death, and an expression of agony passed over her features, as she glanced from her husband to the laughing babe in her arms and thence to a rosy boy of three, who had fallen asleep on the floor with his arms clasped about the neck of their faithful dog, and his head resting against its shaggy side.

"Oh, Hubert, is there no hope? no alternative?" she asked, in a hoarse whisper, as shudderingly she drew the babe closer to her bosom.

"Yes, my Madalena," he answered, mournfully, "there is; but one which the Lord forbid that any Vaudois should accept. All who will catholicize are to be exempt."

"Then, Hubert, we are indeed called to forsake all for Christ," she said, while the tears fell fast from her eyes; "for our little ones can never stand the journey over the mountains at this inclement season."

"I know it," he answered, with quivering lips; "yet, my Madalena, we will not hesitate; for the Master himself has said, 'He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.' And our little Paul is a sturdy lad; perhaps he may have strength to endure the exposure,—but Blanche——"

He could not proceed, but, taking the sweet babe from its mother, he folded it to his heart, covering it with caresses, while Madalena leaned her head upon his shoulder and wept convulsively.

"My dear children," said Barbara, her aged voice trembling with emotion, "this is not as it should be: let us rather rejoice, as did the apostles of old, that we are accounted worthy to suffer shame for His name; let us take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing that in heaven we have a better and an enduring inheritance."

"You are right, dear mother," said Hubert, returning the child to Madalena, "and the 'spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.'"

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be," she said. "The Lord will give grace and glory,—grace now, and glory hereafter. 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.'"

"Yes," said her son, "'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;' but much do I need to use the prayer of the disciples, 'Lord, increase our faith.'"

Reaching the Bible from its shelf, he read aloud the 62d Psalm: "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved." . . . Then, falling upon his knees, his wife and mother joining him in so doing, he poured out a fervent petition for grace and strength to help them in this their time of need.

Rising to their feet again, they stood for a few moments in sad silence on the hearth; then Madalena,

putting the babe into its father's arms, added a dainty or two to her supper-table—a jug of rich cream, some dried fruits, and a kind of biscuit made of chestnuts dried in an oven, or on a kiln, and much used in the valleys instead of macaroons—and urged her husband to sit down and eat.

“You have been gone all day, and must need both food and rest,” she said. “Give little Blanche to me, and you and mother come to the table. You will both feel better when you have eaten, for the food will give you strength.”

“I have no desire for it, wife,” said Hubert.

Yet to please her he made the effort; but appetite was wanting, and he soon left the table, and with a sigh she cleared it away, finished her evening work, and then came and sat down by his side.

The little ones were quietly sleeping in their warm nest—ah, as the mother tucked them in, what a pang shot through her heart at the thought that it might be for almost the last time!—and the three elders drew their chairs close about the fire and conversed in low tones; Hubert telling of all he had heard and seen in La Tour that day, and adding to the information he had already given them that the Vaudois who had been commanded to remove were required to sell their property within twenty days, and, further, that the Roman Catholic worship was to be established in all the Protestant communes; the Vaudois being forbidden, under heavy penalties, to interfere in any way with its celebration.

In the midst of their talk they were startled by a knock at the door; and, as Hubert rose to open it,

Madalena's heart throbbed so violently that she could not have spoken.

But it was only Daniel Girardet, a neighbor, come to inquire concerning the truth of the report which he had just heard, that Gastaldo's edict was now to be carried out. Daniel, too, was a Vaudois, and heard the news with deep concern,—nay, more, with poignant distress; for he had a feeble, sickly wife, an aged bedridden father, and several young and helpless children. Yet not for an instant did he or they entertain the thought of accepting the one alternative offered by the government. They could suffer the loss of all temporal things, yea, of life itself, but they could not abjure; they could not deny the Lord that bought them with his own precious blood, nor give to saints and angels, graven images and pictures, the worship and homage due to the living God alone.

The hamlet, consisting of not more than six or seven families, was entirely Protestant; and ere long, Daniel's entrance was followed by that of all the other men belonging to it, who dropped in, one or two at a time, anxious to hear Hubert's report of what was going on in the capital, and to concert the necessary measures for the speedy removal of their families and household stuff within the prescribed limits.

Their faces were sad, their tones mournful but resigned, and while some of them spoke of this trial as the chastisement of the Lord, sent upon them because of their sins, and of the necessity for humiliation and prayer, that his judgments might be turned away, not one word of anger or hatred toward their cruel foes fell from their lips, not one desire for vengeance did they breathe; and ere they separated, a portion of the

Word was read, and all knelt while the eldest of their number, a gray-haired patriarch, poured out a fervent supplication to the God of Israel, mingled with confession of their sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

Then all retired, and Barbara reminded her son and daughter, who seemed inclined to linger by the fire, that rest was needful to strengthen them for the trials and labors of the coming day.

"Yes, mother, that is true indeed," said Hubert, who stood on the hearth with his arm round his wife, while her head rested on his shoulder. "Come, my Madalena, let us to bed and to sleep, endeavoring to obey the command, 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.' Surely we may safely leave our future in his hands, believing the precious assurance of his word 'that all things work together for good to them that love God.'"

Madalena did not speak; her heart was too full for words; but she moved away submissively to do his bidding. But ere she sought her own couch—poor young mother!—she stole softly to the side of the cradle-bed where her darlings lay sweetly sleeping, and, pressing a kiss on each fair brow, bent over them with a look of love—intense, unutterable love, mingled with speechless anguish.

"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom," said her husband, in a low, moved tone, as he stood beside her and marked the expression of her countenance; "let us trust them to Him who so loved the little ones while here on earth, and who is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

"Yes, Hubert," she answered, in tones scarcely audible, while she shuddered visibly; "but, alas! how many mothers in our beloved valleys have, like us, been driven from their homes, and have seen their little ones perish with cold and hunger on the mountains, or slain before their very eyes by the brutal soldiery! And what reason have I to hope for better things?"

"True, my beloved wife, we cannot tell what bitter trial may be in store for us," he said, drawing her to his side once more, and again supporting her with his arm; "but we do know that 'God reigns, and that not a hair of our heads shall fall to the ground without his will: and we have his promise that no evil shall befall us; for though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby.' If he send trials, dear one, he will also send strength to bear them. 'He giveth more grace;' and 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Lord, increase our faith!" he added, fervently, "and strengthen thy servants for whatsoever thou shalt send."

"Amen," murmured Madalena; and sinking on her knees, while her husband moved quietly away, she poured out her whole soul in prayers and tears and strong supplications.

It was long ere Madalena slept, that night. An alpine storm was raging without; and as she listened to the wind roaring through the gorges, sweeping down the mountain-sides, and groaning in the tree-tops,

and felt her little dwelling rocking in the blast, she trembled and shuddered, and wept to think how soon she, with her aged mother, her beloved husband, and tender babes, might be exposed to its fury without a roof to cover their heads. But, even while she wept; many sweet and precious promises of the word of God, with which her memory was stored, were brought to her recollection by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:—"Many are the troubles of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." And, calmed and soothed, she fell asleep.

Hubert had a brother living in Rora, and thither the fugitives first thought of fleeing; but Angrogna seemed a safer retreat in case further mischief were threatened them; and Madalena, who had a sister in La Tour, expressed an earnest desire to join her in her flight, which would in all probability be to either Angrogna or Bobbi. Both plans had been discussed that evening, and they had retired to rest without coming to a decision; but news reached the little hamlet the next day which fully decided them in favor of the latter plan. This news was, that though the edict required the removal of all the members of the families indicated, Gastaldo would, for the present, content himself with the removal of the heads of those families. Barbara and Madalena might therefore have remained with the little ones in their own cottage-home; but this Madalena was not willing to do, without the protection of her husband's presence; and so it was decided that Hubert should remove his family at once to La Tour,

and, leaving them there in the house of his brother-in-law, Pierre Masson, should himself retire to the heights of Angrogna.

Very thankful was Madalena for this reprieve. La Tour lay so near that she thought her little ones, if well wrapped up, would be able to bear the removal without serious injury ; and a hope sprang up in her heart that the farther journey over the mountains might be delayed until the opening of spring would enable them to take it with safety.

Her heart seemed lightened of half its burden ; yet it was still very sad as she moved quietly but quickly about, gathering together and packing up their clothing and all their little household treasures : for she felt that she was preparing to leave her loved home, probably never to return, or only to find it a blackened pile of ruins.

At length all was ready, and the time had come when they might no longer linger. Hubert had already driven his few cattle to a place of refuge in the valley of Angrogna, and, returning, procured a rude cart, drawn by a mule, in which to remove his little family, and soon his wife and mother were seated in it, each with a child in her arms, and all well wrapped up in whatever warm garments they possessed, while round them were piled their beds and bedding as an additional protection from the intense cold. Hubert tucked these about them with the tenderest care ; then, with one long, lingering, loving look of farewell to their dear cottage-home, they moved on their way, Hubert walking by the side of the cart, and guiding the steps of the mule along the steep winding path that led from the heights down to the valley below.

Their progress was slow and toilsome, for they had to plow their way through deep drifts of snow; but at length they found themselves beside the torrent of Angrogna, and crossing the bridge they entered La Tour, and passing through two or three streets at length stopped before a humble dwelling, whose hospitable door was instantly thrown open to receive them.

"Ah, my brother and sister, and good mother Barbara too, you are most heartily welcome to our little home," said a noble-looking young man, stepping out upon the sidewalk and warmly grasping Hubert's hand, while at the same moment a sweet, girlish face appeared in the doorway, and a musical voice exclaimed, "Ah, sister Madalena! are you not all nearly perished with the cold? Come in quickly, for I have a good fire blazing on the hearth, and no guests could be more welcome than yourselves."

Then embracing her sister, whom Pierre had already lifted from the cart and set down upon the doorstep, "Dear Madalena," she said, drawing her into the house and making her sit down by the fire, "you did well to come to us; for though, alas! no one can tell how soon we may all be compelled to flee from our homes, yet as long as Pierre and I have a roof over our heads we will gladly share its shelter with you. And you too, mother Barbara," she added, turning to the old lady and giving her a cordial embrace; then, seating her in the most comfortable chair in the room, which had been placed in readiness in the warmest nook by the fireside, she bade her consider herself as much at home as if in her son's house.

"And now give little Paul to me, Pierre," she said, addressing her husband, who stood near with the child

in his arms. "Hubert will need your help to bring in the goods."

"Yes, Aline, and he shall have it," replied Pierre, setting the boy down by her side. "There, my little man, go to your aunt, and she will presently give you some supper, when you have got warm, and all these wraps are taken off."

"I'm glad of that, for I'm hungry," said the little fellow. "Please, Aunt Aline, take off this big heavy cloak: it makes me tired."

"I will, darling," she replied, stooping down to unfasten it. "How the boy grows, Madalena, and how like his father he is! He should have been called Hubert."

"Nay, not so, Aline," said Barbara; "Paul is the right name for him, for he does not more resemble his father than my husband, for whom he was named."

"They are both good names," said Madalena, with a fond glance at the ruddy face of her little son; "but perhaps Paul is the more suitable for a minister, which we both hope our little boy will grow up to be."

Her voice faltered with the concluding words, and tears trembled in her eyes; for, alas! how dark and threatening was the cloud that overhung the future of her children!

There was a moment of silence; then Madalena asked, in a more cheerful tone, "Where is your little Hugo, sister?"

"Asleep in his cradle in the next room," answered the young mother; and there were tears in her voice.

"He is not ill, dear Aline?" asked Madalena, anxiously.

"Oh, no, he is quite well and hearty," answered her

sister, with a sigh of thankfulness. "How soundly your little Blanche sleeps! Give her to me while you do the same service for yourself that I have done for Paul. You must be quite weighed down with all those cloaks and shawls."

Madalena gave her the babe, and she sat down with it in her arms, saying, "Ah, the dear little pet! she is quite warm, and I hope has not been at all injured by her journey through the cold."

"She is a sweet and tender blossom," said Pierre, who had just re-entered the room. Then, bending down over his young wife, he spoke a few words to her in an undertone.

Aline trembled and turned pale, and the eyes she raised to his face were swimming in tears.

"To-night? so soon?" she asked.

"Yes, dear wife," he answered, taking her hand in his; "this, you know, is the third day since the edict was published; and, hard as it is to tear ourselves away, leaving our wives and children unprotected, we dare not remain longer, but must withdraw to the heights to-night."

Madalena heard, and she, too, grew pale and trembled. But Hubert, who had entered the room while his brother was speaking, said, "Nay, brother Pierre, say not unprotected, for we leave them in the hands of Him without whom a sparrow shall not fall to the ground. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe.'"

"Father, are you going away?" asked little Paul, running to him.

"Yes, my son," replied Hubert, sitting down, and lifting the boy to his knee; "and you must pray to the

good God, your kind Father in heaven, to take care of mother, and grandmother, and Aunt Aline, and all the little ones."

"I will," said the child, "and I'll ask him to take care of you and Uncle Pierre too, father; and he'll not let anything hurt us: but, father, when are you coming back?"

"I cannot tell, my son," replied Hubert, with emotion, "but I hope ere long. Madalena," he said, turning to his wife, "we meet to-night to draw up a remonstrance, and appoint deputies to carry it to the duke: let us hope, and also pray, that the Lord, in whose 'hand the king's heart is, as the rivers of water, and who turneth it whithersoever he will,' may dispose him to listen to our petitions."

"Yes," said Barbara: "'if the Lord give peace, who then can make trouble?' 'for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.' God reigns, my children; let that be our consolation in the midst of all our afflictions. 'He will cause the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain:' our enemies could have no power at all against us except it were given them from above: and though persecuted, we shall not be forsaken; though cast down, we shall not be destroyed. Some of us, or all of us, may indeed be called to lay down our lives for the truth, but the pain will be short, the suffering soon past, and Heaven will make amends for all."

"The Lord is my light and my salvation!" exclaimed Hubert, fervently, as, setting his little son down, he rose and paced the room. "Whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?"

Little Blanche now woke from her sleep, and seeing her father, stretched out her arms to him, and in her sweet baby way invited him to take her. He did so, and, folding her to his heart as a precious treasure that might not long be his, he continued his walk to and fro, while Aline and Madalena busied themselves in preparing the evening meal.

It was soon ready, and they gathered about the table; thanks were offered up to God, the giver, and his blessing asked upon their food, and then they partook of it almost in silence, for their hearts were too full for much conversation. The men ate mechanically, from the mere feeling that food was necessary to give them physical strength for what was before them, while their wives showed still less appetite, leaving their portion almost untasted on their plates.

Yet they lingered at the table; for, alas! who could say when they should all be gathered about it again?

But at length Hubert rose, and the others following his example, they drew their chairs together round the fire, and Pierre, opening the Bible, read aloud the 46th Psalm: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," etc. Then all knelt, while Hubert, in a voice trembling with emotion, poured out a prayer for themselves, their dear ones, and their beloved land.

They rose from their knees; and now the hour of parting had come: husband and wife must bid adieu, it might be for but a few days, or it might be forever; for who could say what snares or dangers lay in the path of either?

Aline brought her boy, now wide awake, from the inner room, and Pierre, straining him to his heart,

gave him a father's blessing, then set him gently down to clasp his wife in a long, tender embrace.

The parting between Hubert and his Madalena, his mother, and his little ones, was no less tender and affecting. A moment more, and they were gone. Aline and Madalena stood with ears strained to catch the sound of their retreating footsteps; then, as the last faint echo died away in the distance, they turned to clasp each other in a silent, tearful embrace.

"My dear daughters," said the voice of Barbara, in steady, cheerful tones, "let us not give way to useless grief or repinings, which will but unfit us for duty; or question the wisdom of God's dealings with us, or doubt his promise of sustaining grace. The clouds are lowering thick and dark about our pathway, it is true, but behind them the Sun of righteousness still shines, and though we know not what the future may have in store for us, we do know that we, and all our dear ones, are in his hands, and that nothing can befall us without his will."

Aline folded her child to her bosom, and, gazing upon it with unutterable love, "Ah, mother Barbara," she sighed, "you know not how precious this dear babe is to me, or how I shrink and tremble and grow sick at heart at the thought of pain or suffering coming to him, or to my noble husband. Oh, I fear—I fear that if it come to that, I shall not have strength to endure, but shall be left even to deny my Lord to save them."

"No, dear child, not so," said Barbara, laying her hand tenderly on the bowed head of the weeping young wife and mother; "dismiss these torturing fears, for has he not said, 'Fear not: I will help thee;' 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness'?"

CHAPTER II.

"Remember the word that I said unto you: the servant is no greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."—JOHN, xv. 20, 21.

THE sun had long since sunk behind the mountains, and darkness was already spreading her sable pall over the city, as our travelers set forth upon their journey. But they were not to take it alone; for La Tour being almost entirely a Protestant town, there were few families in it who did not suffer the temporary loss of their husbands and fathers that night.

Wrapping their cloaks closely about them—for the night was intensely cold, and a bitter wind from the mountains blew directly in their faces—Hubert and Pierre walked rapidly up the street.

"Let us call for my brother Geoffrey," said Pierre; "he is no doubt expecting us."

Hubert assented, and, turning into another street, they presently paused before a door, and knocked. It was opened instantly by a tall man, wrapped, like themselves, in a cloak.

"We are here, Geoffrey," said Pierre.

"Yes," he replied, "and I am ready. I will not ask you to enter, for I know that time presses. Louis, my boy," and he turned to a lad of twelve or fourteen, who had followed him to the door, "farewell. May the

God of thy fathers protect and preserve thee in danger and in temptation! Care for your mother, boy, and your sisters and young brother, and your father's heart shall bless you."

"I will, father," cried the lad, with difficulty restraining his tears; "but, oh, embrace me once more before you go!" And he flung his arms about his father's neck.

"God bless and keep you, my son," again said Geoffrey, straining him for an instant to his heart. Then, putting him quickly away, he stepped out into the street, where Hubert and his brother stood waiting, but turned again to say, "Have a care for your aunt Aline, and her guests too, Louis. They may need your help now and then, and will want to hear the news when there is aught to tell."

"I will, father—I will strive to do all you wish," replied the boy, earnestly.

He stood watching the receding forms till they were lost in the darkness, then went in and shut the door. How dreary and desolate the house seemed to have suddenly become, as he went back to the room where he had left his mother and young brother and sisters! Louis almost idolized his father, and a terrible fear had crept into his heart that they might never meet again; but he tried to shake it off and be cheerful for the sake of the mother who was no less dear, and to show himself worthy of the trust his father had reposed in him, by doing all he could for her comfort and that of the little ones.

The mother was not weeping; her look was calm and steadfast as that of one whose feet were firmly planted upon the Rock of Ages; but her son's eyes

filled as he looked at her, for he knew that her heart was aching.

The table still stood in the middle of the room, just as they had left it a few moments before, with the almost untasted meal yet upon it, and Louis at once set about helping his mother to clear it away and put everything in order for the night. Then, while she put the little ones to bed, and heard them say their evening prayers, he brought in wood and water, mended the fire, and swept up the hearth, placed his mother's chair in the warmest corner, drew the table near to it, snuffed the candle, and laid her work ready to her hand.

She had not yet returned to the room, and he stood still for a moment, considering whether there was anything more he could do for her comfort. "Ah, yes," he murmured, half aloud, "I know what will console my mother better far than any words of mine." And bringing the large family Bible, he laid it on the table, and, drawing up a chair for himself, asked, as she came in, "Shall I not read to you, mother?"

"Yes, my son," she said, giving him a look of deep affection. "We both have need to-night of the comfort that holy book alone can give. I would like to hear the 46th Psalm."

Louis turned to it, and read in low, distinct tones that, coupled with the precious words, were as sweet music to his mother's ears.

"'God is our refuge,' " she repeated, as he concluded. "Ah, what a refuge he is! He who doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, 'What doest thou?' for who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?"

"Mother," asked the boy, "do you think the duke will listen to our petitions, and withdraw or modify his cruel edict?"

"I do not know, my son," she replied; "but I hope God may incline his heart toward us, that he may do so."

"But if not," and the boy's voice trembled—"if not—oh, mother, will it be a repetition of the fearful scenes our valleys have witnessed in other days?"

"I cannot tell, my son; God only knows," she answered, with a shudder and a heavy sigh: "but let it console us that he will cause the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain."

"Oh, mother, why does he permit it? Why are the wicked so often allowed to triumph over the just, and to slay and torture God's own people whom he loves?"

"That is not a question for us to ask, Louis," she said, "except as it may lead us to a deeper and truer repentance for sin, and a more earnest turning to the Lord; it is enough for us to know that he does permit it, and that he is all-wise, almighty, and all-good. Did not wicked men persecute and slay our blessed Lord, when he was here on earth? and shall the disciple be above his master? or the servant above his lord? Ah! no; it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. And he, our blessed Lord, was holy, while we—ah! my son, how many and inexcusable are our sins! We cannot deny that in the sight of a holy and heart-searching God we deserve all, and more than we can ever be called to suffer."

"Yes, mother, that is indeed true," he said, thoughtfully; "and now I remember that Christ told his dis-

CASELLA

ciples they must expect persecution, and said, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' And again: 'And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.' Ah, mother!" he added, with a sigh, "shall I be able to endure when the time of trial comes?"

She drew the Bible toward her, and, turning to the first chapter of Joshua, pointed to these words, which Louis read aloud in a voice quivering with emotion: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage."

Thus did this pious mother and son converse together, comforting one another with these words of their Lord, until the hour for retiring came.

Meanwhile Hubert, Geoffrey, and Pierre pursued their toilsome way up the valley, joined here and there by one and another of their brethren, some traveling singly, others in groups of three, or four, or half a dozen. Passing Villar, they presently left the main road, and struck into a narrow path, which led them now through the mazes of a forest, now over hill or mountain, and anon along the steep and slippery edge of a precipice, where a single false step would have launched them into eternity, sending them down hundreds of feet to be dashed in pieces on the rocks below. But these hardy mountaineers were sure-footed and fearless, having been inured to such perils from their earliest infancy; and thus, though their way was lighted only by the stars overhead, and the snow beneath and around them, they passed safely through dangers that

to many others might have proved fatal even in broad daylight. Toiling on thus for more than an hour, sometimes in silence, sometimes conversing in suppressed tones, they at length reached a wild secluded glen, shut in on every side by lofty precipices, down the almost perpendicular face of which they made their way with great difficulty by steps cut in the rock, and catching hold of bushes and roots and projecting fragments of stone to keep themselves from falling.

Others had evidently been there before them, for footprints could be faintly discerned in the snow at the bottom of the precipice; and, following these, they presently, upon turning the point of a rock, found themselves just at the mouth of a cavern, though the opening was so well concealed by the overhanging crags with their thick growth of brushwood that it could not have been easily discovered by any one unacquainted with the locality. It was very low and narrow, too, so much so that they could enter only by creeping in one at a time on hands and knees; but following the narrow, winding passage in this way for a few yards, they again turned a point of rock, and a strange wild scene suddenly burst upon their view—a large and lofty subterranean chamber, its walls and ceiling formed of the solid rock, its distant recesses shrouded in impenetrable gloom, and a bright fire blazing in the middle of the floor, while around it were grouped a number of men in every picturesque attitude—some half reclining on the ground, some sitting, others standing, the flickering firelight playing over all, giving a strange weird look to their faces, and casting fantastic shadows on all around.

Of this group several were talking rapidly, but in

low though earnest tones, while the rest listened with rapt attention; and so intent were they upon the business in hand that the entrance of the new-comers was unnoticed, except by one who stood as sentinel near the opening.

He grasped the hand of each with a cordial pressure as they came in, and filing past him they silently drew near the fire, as they did so recognizing one after another those who composed the group about it,—the Barba Leger, Captain Joshua Gianavel, who afterward so greatly signalized himself in the defense of Rora, and in many another hard-fought battle with the Piedmontese troops, and many others, including, indeed, nearly all the Vaudois leaders and heads of families.

The greeting was warm on both sides, for they knew and loved each other as Christian brethren; and then the conversation, interrupted for a moment, was renewed with increased interest, nearly all present taking more or less part in it. The subject was the state of their beloved valleys, and their prospects in the immediate future—what the designs of their enemies probably were, and what might be the best means of averting the threatened storm.

It was decided without a dissenting voice that an earnest remonstrance should be addressed to the duke, and deputies appointed to carry it at once to him. But ere the business of drawing it up was begun, all knelt, and, led by the Barba Leger, fervently implored guidance and direction from above, and the blessing of God upon their enterprise.

A torch was then lighted and held by one of the men, while the leaders, using a large stone for a table, proceeded with their task. The remonstrance when

finished was read aloud for the approval of all present, and afterward signed and sealed. The deputies were then chosen, and directed to set out upon their mission early the next morning.

After that, a portion of Scripture was read, a hymn of praise sung, a prayer offered up, and, wrapping their cloaks about them, they stretched themselves upon the rocky floor, with their feet to the fire, and thus sought needful repose.

The distant peaks of the mountains were growing bright with the coming day, but the little glen was still shrouded in darkness, as the deputies left the cavern, and, climbing the rocky height, took the path that led toward the plain of Piedmont.

But, leaving them to pursue their journey, we will go back a little in our story.

Charles Emanuel, at that time the reigning duke, was a prince of mild and amiable character, and, though a Papist, not disposed to persecute his Waldensian subjects, had he been left to follow his own inclinations; but the provincial councils of Propagandists were continually addressing complaints against the Waldenses to the metropolitan council at Turin, and these complaints were as constantly laid before the duke by the archbishop and ministers of state, all of whom were members of the Propaganda.

Some time before the opening of our story, the Marchioness di Pianeza, who presided over the female Council of Propagandists at Turin, was laid upon a dying bed; and, on learning that she could not recover, she sent for her husband, whom she had not seen for many years, and said to him, "I have much to expiate as toward man and toward yourself. My soul is

in danger: aid me to save it by laboring for the conversion of the Waldenses."

The marquis gave the desired promise, and was the more ready to fulfill it as his wife left him considerable sums of money on condition that he did so.

But, being a soldier and a Papist, he sought to accomplish his end, not by enlightening the minds of the Waldenses in what he believed to be the truth, and convincing their understandings, but by means of fire and sword.

A pretext for this violence had, however, to be sought; but to men so unscrupulous as the Propagandists this was no very difficult task.

The curé of Fenile had been assassinated; and, the murderer being arrested, they promised him a free pardon, on condition that he would make a public confession that he had killed the priest at the instigation of the Waldenses, and of the Pastor Leger in particular. Berru, the assassin, a hardened wretch, who had already three times dipped his hands in a fellow-creature's blood—for this was the third murder he had committed—did not hesitate to perjure himself in order to save his life; and upon the accusation of this reprobate the pastor of San Giovanni was pronounced guilty of having instigated the crime, and sentenced to death without a trial, or even a citation to appear before his judges; while the real murderer was set at liberty.

But to return. On reaching Turin, and presenting themselves at the ducal palace, the Waldensian deputies were allowed an interview with his royal highness the duke, and found him apparently disposed to clemency.

"I am willing they should remain at San Giovanni

and La Tour," he said to Count Christopher of Lu-
serna, who interceded for the remonstrants, "provided
they will withdraw from the other localities nearer the
plain; for their adversaries will not let me have any
peace till they have got some such concession."

Encouraged by these words, the deputies withdrew,
full of hope of a satisfactory adjustment of their difficul-
ties; but the Propagandists, hearing of this favorable
reception, hastened to report to the duke that the Wal-
denses were in a state of revolt and had already caused
the *cure* of Fenile to be assassinated; and in conse-
quence, when the deputies again presented themselves
at the palace, they were told they could not see the
duke, but must carry their complaints to the Council of
the Propaganda. They did so, and there also were
refused a hearing, being told that, as they were Prot-
estants, whatever they had to say must be said by the
mouth of a Popish attorney.

The Popish attorney was sent, and then the council
ordered deputies to be appointed who should be in-
vested with full powers to sign engagements in the
name of the whole people. These deputies were
accordingly sent; but, their instructions being not to
sign anything by which the privileges that had been
from time to time conceded to the Waldenses would be
lessened, the council refused to receive them until they
should come furnished with unlimited powers.

CHAPTER III.

"I hear the storms around me rise;
But when I dread the impending shock,
My spirit to her refuge flies:
Thou art my Rock."

It was a wild, blustery evening in March; the wind came roaring down the valley, sweeping through the streets of La Tour, shaking the windows and rattling at the doors. A fire was burning on the hearth in the family-room of Pierre Masson's dwelling, and near it sat Barbara Romano, quietly knitting, and looking with a kindly smile at Aline, who, on the other side of the fire, was caressing and fondling her baby boy, who stood in her lap, stroking and patting his young mother's face with his little fat hands, pulling down her hair, and crowing with delight at the mischief he was doing. A stand, on which a candle was burning, had been drawn up in front of the fire, and beside it sat Madalena, at work upon a garment for her little Paul, who, with his baby sister, was quietly sleeping in the next room.

"Ah, Hugo, my pet, you are very noisy to-night," said Aline, "and full of mischief, too. I cannot think what makes my boy so wakeful. You should be sleeping now beside your little cousins."

"He had a very long nap this afternoon, you know, sister," said Madalena.

"Ah, yes, so he had," said Aline, gently disen-

gaging her hair from the little fellow's grasp; "and how merry he is to-night,—my darling, darling boy! my own precious first-born son!" she murmured, clasp ing him close to her heart and kissing him again and again with passionate fondness.

There were tears in her voice, and Madalena's eyes filled as she looked at her.

"Dear sister," she whispered, taking Aline's hand and pressing it in hers, "let us trust our little ones to the tender care of Him who said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'"

"I do strive to do so," she answered, in quivering tones, "and at times I think I can; but oh, Madalena, the clouds gather thicker and blacker about us every day; and the thought of the fearful persecutions which in former days have deluged our valleys in blood is ever with me, by day and by night. I dream of the tender babes snatched from their mothers' arms to have their brains dashed out against the rocks and their bodies thrown into the road; it seems to be my own boy, and I wake, all weak and trembling, and shuddering with horror, to strain him to my heart and pray God that such a fate may never be his."

Madalena's tears were falling fast, and for a moment she could not command her voice to reply; for she herself was, alas! no stranger to such harrowing fears and terrible dreams; but at length, controlling her emotion, she said, "Dearest sister, let us remember our Saviour's words, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' These clouds may blow over, and we know not that our enemies contemplate a repetition of such horrors."

Aline shook her head sorrowfully.

"I know that many are loth to believe it," she said;

"And to me it becomes plainer every day. What mean the quartering of so many troops in our valleys, and the unsatisfactory replies given again and again to our deputies? Ah, sister, I fear—I fear that Gianavel is right, and that our enemies are about to attempt the carrying out of that ancient project,—the utter extermination of the Vaudois. Oh, would that our people could be convinced of their danger, that they might combine together for energetic and effectual resistance before it is too late!"

Aline spoke with the vehemence of one who felt that all she held dear on earth was in imminent peril, and Madalena grew pale as she listened. She well knew the malignity and bloodthirstiness of their foes; and as memory recalled the history of the terrible scenes of former days at which her sister had but hinted, she felt that these fears were not unfounded. She knew that Popery had ever been, and—since she teaches her own infallibility—must ever be, where she is strong enough to dare to show her true nature, a persecuting power.

"Oh, Madalena! Madalena!" sobbed Aline, clasping her child convulsively to her bosom, "I sometimes am tempted to wish I had never known the happiness of being a mother; for how could I bear to see my darling suffer? It were worse than ten thousand deaths. And even should this threatened storm pass by, and he be spared to grow up to manhood, who shall say that it will not be but to share the fate of those whose name he bears,—our beloved father, and our precious only brother?"

Madalena shuddered, and covered her face, while the tears fell like rain down her cheeks, and her whole frame shook with bitter, bursting sobs.

Ah, too well did she remember that dreadful day when her father was carried off by the monks and thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition, to be brought out again, after months of slow torture, only to die at the stake; and never could she forget her mother's heart-breaking anguish, which soon laid her in the grave, leaving three orphans to mourn their irreparable loss,—Hugo, the eldest, a noble boy of twelve, and his two young sisters, herself and Aline. They had grown up together, loving each other with most intense affection; and the sisters' hearts were well-nigh broken when, shortly before Madalena's marriage, their brother was seized upon a false accusation of the Propagandists, and sent to the galleys for fifteen years. They had heard nothing of him since, and knew not whether he were now living or dead.

Barbara, who had hitherto listened in silence, now drew near to the weeping sisters, and, taking a hand of each, said, with much emotion, "Dear daughters, whatever may befall us, we have still one comfort, which none can ever take from us: 'the Lord reigns, and he will give grace and glory; grace and strength to bear whatever burden he lays upon us here, and glory afterward when he shall call us to himself. Oh, whatever may be our trials here, Heaven will make amends for all! You, Aline, have spoken of your love for your darling child; but it is not so great as your Lord's love to you.'"

And, opening the Bible which lay on the stand beside Madalena, she read aloud, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee."

"Ah, my children," she asked, "can you fear to trust your all in His hands?"

Then, falling on her knees, she poured out a prayer full of faith and submission and childlike confidence; a prayer for herself, her companions, their dear ones, absent and present, and for their beloved land.

A knock at the outer door startled them just as she rose from her knees. Aline and Madalena looked at each other with pale, affrighted faces; but Barbara said, "Fear nothing, children: it is probably your nephew, Aline, come to bring us some news. I will admit him."

So saying, she left the room, returning the next moment, followed by Geoffrey's son Louis.

The boy's face wore a look of unusual gravity and care as he came forward to greet his aunt and her sister, and then took a seat between them.

"What news, Louis?" asked Aline, her tones trembling in spite of herself. "Something important, I doubt not, to have brought you out this stormy night."

"No good news, aunt," replied the boy, with a mournful shake of the head. "The storm gathers apace. Our deputies have again been sent back, with orders that others be appointed, with unlimited powers: protocols, memorials, and supplications have been sent from time to time to the duke, and to the Marquis di Pianezza: the latter replies in a tone of moderation, but gives no satisfaction, and men doubt his sincerity: indeed, all is doubt and uncertainty, save one thing—the women and children must now withdraw within the prescribed limits. It is no longer enough that the heads of all the Vaudois families have gone; but an order has come requiring every individual member of those families to leave for the upper parts of the valleys before to-morrow night."

A deadly paleness overspread the faces of his listeners, and the young mother drew her child closer to her heart.

"In this fearful storm!" she murmured, with trembling lips. "Have the persecutors no mercy? It will be death to the tender babes."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Madalena, almost bitterly. "The wild beasts of the forest would be sooner moved with compassion than they; even the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

"I know that God will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor," said Barbara, clasping her hands and raising her eyes to heaven. "'Be merciful unto us, O God, be merciful unto us; for our soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will we make our refuge, until these calamities be overpast.' 'Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man.'"

"Oh," cried Louis, earnestly, springing from his seat and beginning to pace to and fro across the room, "if they would but listen to Captain Gianavel and prepare at once for energetic defense! but they think him too violent—too distrustful: even my father and mother are among the number that think so; and so did my Uncle Pierre at first, but now he sees differently, and has joined Captain Gianavel's band, along with Uncle Hubert and his brother Antony."

"Have you seen them, Louis?" asked Madalena and her sister, in a breath.

"Yes," said the boy; "mother sent me yesterday with a message to my father, and I was present at a meeting to consider what further measures should be taken, and I heard both the Barba Leger and Captain

Gianavel express their firm conviction that it is the determined purpose of our enemies to sweep the valleys with fire and sword; and they urged our people to hesitate no longer, but at once to make every preparation for a vigorous defense."

"And how was their advice received?" asked Aline, with intense anxiety.

"Oh, the majority still hesitate," replied the boy, sadly. "They have prayed to God for counsel; they have written to Geneva for instruction, and advised with the barbas; but though the general voice says, 'Defend yourselves,' the uncertainty of their position keeps them from coming to any decided resolution or forming any concerted plan. They wish to obey the duke and give him no reason to credit the falsehood that they are in a state of revolt; and yet the presence of so many troops, and the rumor of others soon to be quartered in the valleys, make them extremely uneasy."

All were silent when Louis had ceased to speak, each occupied with her own sad thoughts, and for some moments no sound was heard in the room but the crackling of the fire on the hearth, and the soft breathing of the little Hugo, who had fallen asleep in his mother's arms; but in the deep hush that reigned there the howling of the storm without became more painfully distinct, and Madalena and Aline shuddered, and drew nearer to each other, as they listened, for both were thinking of the morrow's exposure of their darlings.

"'Even the winds and the sea obey him,'" whispered Barbara, tenderly; "and 'like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' Fear not; for he will care for you and your little ones."

"He will; I will try to trust, and not be afraid," replied Madalena.

Then, turning to the boy, "You have been with your father and uncles, Louis?" she said; "are they not coming to see to the removal of their families and effects?"

"No, Aunt Madalena; they thought it not best to venture to return to the town at present, but will meet us to-morrow some distance up the valley; and I am to take charge of you till then," he added, with a look of honest pride at the trust reposed in him. "My mother has already nearly finished her preparations, and I have now come to help you with yours."

"Let us to work, then, at once!" exclaimed Barbara, energetically. "We have no time to lose."

Madalena rose and folded up her sewing, while Aline carried her sleeping babe to his bed and laid him gently down. One moment she lingered, to cover him up warmly and press a soft kiss on his rosy cheek, sighing deeply as she did so, then hastened to assist her sister and Barbara in the work of preparation for their departure.

Louis, too, lent his aid, proving himself a willing and most valuable assistant, and the work went on rapidly, though almost in silence; for the hearts of the toilers were heavy with care and sorrow.

At length all was so far completed that they would be able to leave by noon of the next day, and, as it was now growing late, Louis went home to his mother, and Aline, securing the door after him, returned to the room where she had left her companions. Then Barbara, as the eldest of the three, read a portion of Scripture, and implored the watchful care of their heavenly Father over their slumbers.

The bell on the convent tower was just striking eleven as Madalena bent over her sleeping babes, thinking with anguish of what the morrow might have in store for them.

"Oh, my darlings! my darlings!" she murmured, "would God I could die for you! O God," she cried, sinking upon her knees, "'be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Keep me from my deadly enemies who compass me about!'"

"Fear not; I will help thee." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even forever," were the sweet words that came to her remembrance. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

"Lord, I will trust thee," she said; "forgive my unbelief, and do with me and mine as seemeth thee good. Spare us to each other, if it be thy will; and if not—O God, give us grace and strength according to our day!"

She had rolled her burden on the Lord; and, laying herself down beside her little ones, she soon fell into a sweet and dreamless sleep.

But not so with Aline. She too sought the Lord in prayer ere she retired for the night, but, with a weaker faith than her sister's, took up again a part of the burden she had laid at his feet, and spent the hours until morning in wakeful anguish of spirit, or in *unquiet slumber* disturbed by frightful dreams.

CHAPTER IV

"Sleep, little baby! sleep!
Not in thy cradle-bed,
Not on thy mother's breast—
But with the quiet dead."

MRS. SOUTHEY.

"As the bird to its sheltering nest,
When the storm on the hills is abroad,
So his spirit had flown from this world of unrest,
To repose on the bosom of God."

WILLIAM H. BURLEIGH.

WHEN morning came at length, the storm had somewhat abated; sleet and snow had almost ceased to fall; but the sky was still overcast with clouds, and the wind from the mountains blew keen and cutting.

It was not such a day as a careful mother would select for exposing her little ones; but, alas! these poor Vaudois mothers had no choice; the hand of tyranny and oppression was raised to drive them forth from their homes to the bleak mountain-sides, and they must go.

Sadly, but expeditiously, their remaining preparations were completed, and, having taken every precaution in their power to protect themselves, and especially their children, from the weather, they set out,—Hubert's family, with Aline and her child, in one cart, and Geoffrey's wife and children in another; each carrying what they could of their clothing and household stuff, and hoping that the husbands and fathers might be

permitted to return at some future day to secure the rest.

They took their way up the valley of Angrogna, and shortly before reaching the village of that name were joined by their husbands, who conducted them to the temporary places of refuge they had provided. An elderly couple living in Angrogna—whose children were all either married or dead, and whose family consisted of only themselves and a young servant named Bianca—opened their doors to Martha, the wife of Geoffrey, and her children; but Hubert and Pierre, turning aside into a mountain-path ere they entered the village, led their families to a hamlet still farther up the heights, nearer to La Vachera, and almost concealed by rocks and trees; deeming it a safer retreat than the larger town in case further mischief should be intended them by their foes.

The cold seemed to increase as they ascended, and the wind—which blew directly in their faces, carrying with it a heavy shower of sleet and snow—to grow more and more keen and cutting, piercing to their very vitals; and they reached the door of Martin Rostagnol's cottage wet, weary, and almost benumbed with cold.

Martin himself, an aged man, with silvery locks, and Sara Terbano, his daughter, a meek, patient-faced woman, met them at the door and gave them kindly and cordial welcome to the best their house afforded.

"You are very wet, and must be very cold, too, I know," said Sara, placing seats for her guests near a bright fire that blazed on the hearth; "but I hope we will soon be able to cure you of both ills. Sit down,

and let me help to take off the wrappings of the little ones. God grant they may have received no injury from their exposure!"

Fervently the mothers echoed the prayer in their hearts, and most anxiously they watched their darlings lest some indication of sickness should pass unobserved. It was soon evident that little Blanche had taken some cold, and, alas! as night drew on, Aline noticed with alarm that her baby breathed with difficulty and that his little hand felt very hot and feverish. She drew the attention of the others to these symptoms of illness, and such simple remedies as were within their reach were at once applied. Barbara had some knowledge of the treatment of common complaints, customary in those days, as had also Martin's wife, Susan Rostagnol, who herself lay bedridden in the next room, a patient, uncomplaining sufferer; and, Barbara going to her bedside, the two consulted together as to what it were best to do for the child.

But their united skill proved unavailing; the fever increased, respiration grew more and more labored, and the young mother hung over her darling in speechless anguish. All night she sat by the fire with him on her lap, and scarcely taking her eyes from his face, except to raise them pleadingly to those about her; for she was not left at any time alone: Pierre shared her vigil, and the others watched with them by turns.

Morning dawned at length, but the babe was still growing worse every hour, in spite of all they could do to relieve him; and now Pierre went down to the valley in quest of one Daniel Morel, an old Vaudois, reckoned by his neighbors to have great skill in the use of

nerbs and simples.* He came, and tried other remedies; nor was prayer for God's blessing upon them forgotten; but, alas! neither did his skill avail aught for the restoration of the little one; the disease made steady progress day by day, and vain was the help of man.

All saw at length that the decree had gone forth, and that the sweet babe would soon be in that land where sickness and pain and death can never come.

Aline was the last to resign all hope. "I cannot give him up!" she cried; "my little one, my precious, darling, first-born son! O God, spare our baby to us; he is our only one!"

"Aline, my beloved wife," said Pierre, taking her hand in his, and speaking in tones tremulous with emotion, "if the Master has come, and is calling for our precious little one—nay, not ours, but his, lent to us but for a time—shall we hesitate to give the darling into his tender care? Ah, may he not be mercifully taking him away from the evil to come? Then let us bow in meek submission to his holy will, and cheerfully give to him of his own."

"Ah, Pierre, is it indeed so?—is there no longer any hope?" she asked, in a voice of unutterable anguish, while the tears fell fast down her pale cheeks.

"Yes, dearest," he said, "hope that the Good Shepherd will keep our little lamb safe in his bosom till we also shall be called into the fold above."

* There were no regular physicians among the Waldenses at this period. Muston mentions *permission to practice medicine among themselves* as one of the privileges obtained for them by General Zimmerman in 1794, and which had never before been conceded to them.

The dying babe lay on its mother's lap, and they were all gathered about it, the women weeping quietly, in sympathy with the grief of the young parents, and the men looking on with grave, sad countenances.

"Is there no help?" asked Aline, again, lifting her tearful, pleading eyes to the face of Daniel Morel as he drew near, felt the pulse, and gazed sorrowfully upon the still, unconscious face.

"Yes," he said, "the Lord Jesus will be with him and with you. He says, 'In me is thine help. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee.'"

Then, kneeling, and all the others following his example, he poured out a fervent prayer for the babe, that he might have a safe and easy passage through the dark river of death to the bright realms above, and for the bereaved parents, that the Lord would comfort their sad hearts, "giving them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

They rose, and stood around, looking at the little one as it gently breathed its life away. His eyes had been closed; but suddenly he opened them wide, looked up into his mother's face with a smile of exceeding sweetness, and was gone.

"Oh, my baby! my baby!" cried Aline, with a wail of anguish, as she snatched the beautiful clay to her bosom; "'would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!'"

They let her weep for a little, weeping with her too; then Pierre, gently taking the tiny corpse from her arms, pressed a loving kiss on the cold lips, and, giving it into Madalena's care, drew his wife to his bosom.

"Weep here, my Aline," he said: "tears are not for

bidden us, and Jesus wept with those who mourned for their dead; but let us kiss the rod, nor dare murmur or repine at the will of Him who doeth all things well."

"Yes," she whispered, amid her blinding tears and choking sobs, "it is a bitter, bitter trial, but far less than my sins have deserved; and I will not, I dare not, murmur, lest you too and Madalena should be taken from me."

"But even should the Lord be pleased to remove us and every earthly prop, beloved," he said, "you will not be left alone; for has He not said, 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you'?"

"It is a most gracious and precious promise," she replied, "and, alas! the time may be very near at hand when any Vaudois mother may well rejoice to know that her little one is safely folded above. But oh, my husband, the thought will not leave me that but for the cruelty of our oppressors in thus driving us forth from our homes at this inclement season, my darling had still been safe and happy in my arms; and it is not easy fully and freely to forgive them. Ask the Lord to help me do it."

"Yes, Aline," he said, with a heavy sigh; "the same thought has been present to my mind; but we will agree together to entreat our Lord to help us to look upon this bitter trial as sent by him in love and not in anger; for does he not say, 'As many as I love I rebuke and chasten'? and we will ask him to enable us to 'be zealous and repent,' and to 'forgive, even as we would be forgiven;' and he will hear our prayer and grant our petition; for his promise is, 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they

shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' ”

Little Hugo slept his last sleep under the snow in Angrogna's valley, and his doting young mother sat weeping in her desolation in the house of her kind entertainers. Pierre, Hubert, and the aged Martin had gone to a meeting of the different communes to consult concerning the affairs of their country, and Barbara was with the invalid in the next room; so that no one was present with the sorrowing, childless mother but Madalena and her little ones and Sara Terbano.

Madalena saw the fast-dropping tears and the bosom heaving with suppressed sobs, and she knew how her sister's heart was aching, and how she missed the tiny form she had been wont to clasp so fondly to her bosom; and, taking up her own little Blanche, she silently laid her in Aline's arms.

Aline pressed the sweet babe close to her heart, kissing it over and over again and dropping hot tears on its little face.

“Don't cry, dear Aunt Aline,” said Paul, coming to her side; “don't cry any more. Little Hugo is so happy up there with the Lord Jesus. Let me wipe away your tears, and don't cry any more.” And, lifting the corner of his little apron, he tried to wipe her eyes with it.

“Dear boy, God bless and keep you!” she said, embracing him with deep affection. “Ah, Madalena!” she exclaimed, looking up at her sister, “you have two darlings, and they are both spared to you; and what a flock Martha has! and I—I had but one, but *one*, and he is taken away.”

“Yes, dear sister, but he is safe, while mine—ah!

what may I not dread for mine?" replied Madalena, gazing with an expression of anxious foreboding upon her babes.

"Yes, he is safe, and I bless God for that," said Aline. "But oh, Madalena, you know not the aching void in my heart; you know not the longing that comes to me, every hour in the day and night, for a sight of my baby's face, and to feel the clasp of his tiny arms around my neck, and his soft cheek laid close to mine. I sleep, and dream that he is once more laid in my bosom; I hear his soft prattle, and try to clasp him in my arms, but only to wake, and weep to find it all a dream, and that he is not there."

"Ah, yes, I know it must be terrible indeed, and I pray God to comfort you, my poor sister," said Madalena, tenderly, putting her arms about her sister's waist, and pressing a kiss on her smooth, white forehead.

"I know you love me and feel for my grief, dear Madalena," replied Aline. "But, oh, you cannot sympathize fully with me, because you have never lost a child yourself."

"But I have, my poor friend," said Sara, drawing near, and taking the hand of the weeper in hers, with a pitying look. "I have mourned over a darling babe in days gone by, just as you are doing now; but, alas! I have lived to know far deeper and bitterer sorrows."

"Shall I tell you my story?" she asked, as Aline turned upon her a look of mingled surprise and interest, evidently wondering what sorrow could be bitterer than hers.

"Ah, yes, if it be not troubling you too much," she replied, with still the same look of interest; and Sara began.

"I was born in this house, as were my father and grandfather before me," she said; "but it is not needful to go farther back in my story than to them.

"My parents had eight children—four of whom died in infancy; of the survivors I was second in age, having a brother older, and a brother and sister younger, than myself. We lived very happily together, enduring no more from oppression and persecution than commonly falls to the lot of the Vaudois, until several years after my elder brother and I had grown up to man's and woman's estate.

"At twenty I married Francis Terbano; and two years afterward we buried our first-born son, a sweet babe, a little more than a year old."

Aline drew nearer to her friend, and softly pressed her hand

"I thought it a bitter trial," continued Sara, returning the kindly pressure, while a tear stole silently down her cheek; "and so it was, indeed; but as nothing, compared to those that followed. A year later, our hearts were gladdened by the birth of a little daughter; but she was scarcely six months old when my beloved husband and dear elder brother were arrested on a false accusation of the monks, tried, condemned, and sent to the galleys for twenty-five years."

Sara paused for a moment, overcome with emotion, then went on again:

"None of us were permitted to see them, but they were carried away without even a farewell to parent, wife, or child. My poor mother was almost heart-broken; and for myself—my babe seemed all that was left me to live for. Mother had a stroke of paralysis, and lay ill for many weeks; but at length she so far

recovered as to be about again, though looking like the mere wreck of her former self; yet not one murmur did I ever hear from either her lips or my father's. They bowed in meek submission to their heavenly Father's will; and I trust I was at length enabled to do the same."

"And have you heard nothing from your husband since?" asked Aline, in a tone of tender sympathy.

"Nothing," replied Sara, wiping away the fast-falling tears that were chasing each other down her cheeks. "Not one word has ever reached us from either him or my brother, and we know not whether they are now living or dead."

"Ah, and so it has been with our only brother, Hugo, for whom and our father my little one was named," sobbed Aline. "Five years ago—was it not, Madalena?—he was sent there under sentence for fifteen years; and we have received no tidings of him since."

"Yes, it is a little more than five years now," replied Madalena, weeping. "Ah, we can feel for each other, Sara, though your trial is heavier even than ours; but Hugo was our only and dearly-loved brother."

"Alas! my story is not yet finished," said Sara. "Our heaviest trial was yet to come."

For a moment she seemed utterly unable to proceed; but at length, conquering her emotion, she continued her narrative:

"When my little girl, my darling, my greatest earthly treasure, was between four and five years of age, my young sister one day took her out for a walk. They had been gone an hour or more, and we were every moment looking for their return, when from the ravine below I heard my child scream as if greatly

terrified or hurt, and my sister's voice calling loudly for help. We all rushed instantly from the house, but, on reaching the spot, we found only my youngest brother lying upon the ground, weltering in his gore. He had been stabbed in a number of places, and lived only long enough to tell us that a party of monks had seized and carried off my sister and my darling child, and that he had been slain in attempting to rescue them."*

Sara covered her face, and wept convulsively. It was some moments ere she was able to speak again.

"We have never seen or heard of our dear ones since," she said, at length. "You well know, my friends, how utterly useless it is for a Vaudois to complain of an outrage committed by the monks: we knew no redress was to be had, and we bore our loss in silence. My dear brother was soon laid in his grave; but our grief for him was light, compared to the overwhelming anguish we endured at the thought of those who had fallen alive into the very jaws of the Romish wolf. My dear, pious mother uttered no murmur; but another stroke of paralysis, heavier than the first, laid her upon her bed, and she has never risen from it since. Ah, Aline, I have learned to thank God that my baby boy was so soon taken to a better and happier world than this. For him I have no fears, no anxieties; but for my little Anna, how my heart aches! The thought of her, and of my dear young sister Magdalen, is ever present to my mind, waking and sleeping; and I know not how I could endure it, could I not roll my burden upon the Lord. Oh, what an unspeakable comfort to

* See Appendix, Note A.

know that God reigns, and that he—the hearer and answerer of prayer—is with them wherever they may be, and is able to keep them from error and sin, and to protect and preserve them from all danger and suffering, if it be his will ! and, if not, his will be done. ‘ Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil ? ’ ”

“ Ah, yes, Sara, your cross is indeed far, far heavier than mine,” said Aline, in a tone of heartfelt sympathy. “ My little one is safe, and yours still in peril ; and,” she added, with a loving glance at Madalena, “ both husband and dear sister have been torn from you, while to me both are still spared.”

Barbara, coming at this moment from the inner room, said that Susan wished to speak with her daughter, and Sara went to her at once. But soon, returning, she said, softly, to Aline, “ Will you not come and sit with my mother for a little while ? She feels for your loss, and would fain speak a word of sympathy and comfort to you.”

Aline rose instantly, and followed Sara to the bedside of the invalid, who, extending the one hand she was still able to use, greeted her with gentle, loving words, and asked her to sit down close by her side.

Aline raised the hand and pressed it reverently to her lips, while great tears gathered in her eyes and rolled fast down her cheeks ; tears that fell now from sympathy with the sufferer before her, rather than at the remembrance of her own heavy loss. Susan lay propped up with pillows ; and the helpless attitude and the look of patient suffering on the wan, wasted features were very touching, especially to one who had just been listen-

ing to the story of the wrongs which had brought her to this pitiable condition.

"Dear child," she said, softly pressing Aline's hand, which she still held in hers, "I feel for you; I have felt for you, and prayed God to comfort you all through this sore trial he has sent you. And he will comfort you, my child; for his own gracious word is, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted.'"

"He does comfort me, dear mother," whispered Aline, through her fast-falling tears. "I know not how I could endure it, but for his sweet sympathy and love. I know that in faithfulness he has afflicted me; I know he never sends one unneeded pang to any of his people."

"Never!" said Susan. "'And in all their afflictions he is afflicted; and the angel of his presence saves them.' Ah, my child, it is worth while to pass through deep waters, that we may feel how his hand can support us even there; worth while to experience heavy trials, that we may learn the tenderness of His sympathy and love who himself 'hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.' He knows, as no earthly friend can, however near and dear, just how heavily the cross presses upon each torn and bleeding heart; and well does he know, also, how to heal the wounds and bind up the broken heart. I can feel for you too, poor stricken one, though not as he does; for I too have been called to part with my sweet babes. But let us not think of them as laid away in the cold tomb, but as lying in Jesus' bosom, with his loving arms folded about them, sheltering them from all harm and danger."

"Ah, how thankful I ought to feel that my darling is there!" murmured Aline, wiping away her tears

"And you, kind mother, are forgetting your own sorrows to comfort me, though yours are far, far heavier than mine."

"But yours is a fresh grief," said Susan, tenderly, "while I have had years in which to learn to bear up under mine; and time, dear child, though it cannot heal, does at length blunt the keen edge of sorrow: else how could frail mortals endure its weight?"

"Yes," replied Aline, "but some of yours, I should think, must come anew to you every day. For those who are in heaven we can cease to grieve, though we miss them still; but for others whose condition we know not—and then this weakness and helplessness—this constant confinement to a bed of pain and weariness—ah, how can you bear it all so patiently?"

"I trust all with my God," replied Susan. "He will take care of my beloved ones; for is he not the hearer and answerer of prayer? and may I not approach his throne of grace on their behalf whenever I will? And he enables me to leave them in his hands without a doubt or fear, and to say with all my heart, concerning both their loss and that of my health and strength, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.' I can lie here content, Aline, because he has put me here, and feel that it is sweet to do and suffer all his holy will."

CHAPTER V.

"Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man."

PSALM xliii. 1.

"Thus far into the bowels of the land
Have we march'd on without impediment."

SHAKESPEARE: *Richard III.*

SEVERAL weeks had elapsed since the death of little Hugo, and yet there was no material change in the condition or prospects of our friends, who were still domiciled in the cottage of their hospitable entertainers.

It was now the middle of April. The month of March had been occupied in the transmission of memorials, protocols, and supplications from the Waldenses to the duke and the marquis, and with replies from the latter, full of seeming moderation, which he, with the duplicity taught by his religion, used as a cloak to his cruel designs; thus endeavoring to throw the Waldenses off their guard and prevent them from making any preparation for defense.

The Council of the Propaganda had, as we have before stated, required deputies to be sent furnished with unlimited powers,—refusing to treat with the second deputation, whose instructions forbade them to sign anything by which the privileges that had been from time to time conceded to their people should be diminished; and, accordingly, early in April a third deputation had been dispatched, consisting of two delegates, invested with full powers to accept any conditions his highness might be pleased to grant, pro-

vided their liberty of conscience was not assailed; in which case they were to ask permission of the duke for the Waldenses to withdraw altogether from his dominions.

This was putting the question courageously, and so unambiguously that an evasive answer could not well be returned. Therefore, to gain time to carry out his nefarious designs, the marquis announced that he would give his reply on the 17th, on which day they were directed to call and receive it.

The deputies, full of good faith and confidingness, called at the appointed time, but were told to come at a later hour. They did so, and were again informed that his excellency was not yet prepared to receive them, and they must call still later. They went away, and came again as directed, and were then told to come the next day but one.

They were now filled with impatience and alarm, and turned away, asking each other, "What can this mean?"

The marquis had deceived them, as they learned ere long; and while they, in their confiding simplicity, were calling again and again at his palace, seeking an audience with him, he was already marching at the head of an army to invade their homes, having stolen away from the city at nightfall on the 16th to join the troops that had been directed to await him on the road to the valleys.

Geoffrey, Hubert, and Pierre, with most of the men of La Tour, had repaired thither a few days previously, for the purpose of winding up their affairs there, preparatory to their final removal. On the 17th, while their deputies were still at Turin, besieging the palace

of the marquis, a messenger sent by him arrived at La Tour, bringing an order to the Waldenses to provide for the entertainment of eight hundred foot and three hundred horse, whom his royal highness had commanded to be quartered in their commune.

"How can his royal highness require us to lodge his soldiers in a place where his last edict has forbidden us ourselves to live?" asked the Waldenses.

"Then why are you here?" retorted the messenger.

"We are here for our affairs," they replied; "but we have removed our permanent habitation within the limits that have been prescribed to us."

The messenger returned, and the Waldenses, apprehending an attack from the invading army, hastily constructed a barricade at the entrance to their town, opposite the bridge of Angrogna.

It was nearly ten o'clock. Geoffrey and Pierre, who had been laboring diligently at the barricade, had retired shortly before to the now dismantled home of the latter, for a little rest and refreshment. They sat at a table on which a candle was burning, while beside it stood a loaf of bread and a can of milk, which they were sharing between them.

Neither had spoken for some moments, when Geoffrey, sighing heavily, remarked, "I much fear me, Pierre, that Gianavel was right; for otherwise what mean the quartering of so many troops in our valleys, and the marching of so large a force upon our capital,—commanded, too, by one of the chiefs of that Propaganda whose avowed object is the spread of Popery and the extirpation of our so-called heresy?"

"It is surely time," replied his brother, "that the warnings of our friends and the menaces of our enemies

had opened our eyes to our danger; the hostile intentions of the Popish party can no longer be doubted."

"Would that our deputies had returned," said Geoffrey, "that we might learn from them how far it is necessary to keep on our guard, and to what extent we may trust our sovereign! The Vaudois have ever been loyal, and we would wish to obey and quarter his troops; yet, having nothing prepared, how can we do so? and how dare we, while we see at their head a chief of that Propaganda which has vowed our destruction?"

"No," said Pierre; "and in our doubt and uncertainty we are resorting to half-measures, which, I fear, will prove our ruin. It were far better, to my thinking, either to show confidence in our sovereign by a ready compliance with all his demands, or at once to prepare for determined resistance. Hark! there is Hubert," he added, as a hurried footstep was heard in the passage without. "I am glad he has come in time to share our meal."

The door was thrown hastily open as he spoke, and Hubert rushed in, quite out of breath with running.

"What news?" asked the others, starting to their feet.

"The marquis has already passed Bricherasco, Fenile, Campiglione, and San Giovanni, and is even now under the walls, at the head of two regiments," he replied. "Let us hasten to assist in defending the barricade, for there are not more than three or four hundred of us in the city, and every man is needed."

"We are ready!" they cried, seizing their guns, which stood in a corner of the room. "But, Hubert," said Pierre, pointing to the table as they went out,

"there is food: you need it: you will fight all the better for it."

Hubert caught up the can and took a deep draught, for he was indeed both hungry and thirsty, and, snatching the remains of the loaf, he ran after his companions.

A few moments brought them to the walls, whence, by the light of the full moon, they beheld the whole army of Pianeza encamped on the plain which extends from Les Appiots to Pra la Fera and Les Eyrals; and scarcely had they taken their station beside their comrades when an officer was seen to leave the camp and come toward them.

He halted before the gate, and, addressing the Waldenses, informed them that he was sent by the general-in-chief, the Marquis di Pianeza, to demand of them entertainment for his troops.

"It is impossible for us to provide entertainment for such an army," replied the Waldenses: "there is nothing prepared, and we must be allowed time to consider the matter."

"The marquis will allow of no delay," responded the messenger; "his troops must be received forthwith, or he will take forcible possession."

He turned and went back to his master, and the Waldenses, seeing what would follow, hastened to intrench themselves behind their barricade, and, calling upon God to aid their just cause, they calmly awaited the attack.

It was not long in coming. Fiercely the Popish troops assaulted the bastion; but so bravely was it defended that, after three hours' hard fighting, they found themselves still repulsed.

"This will never do," said the haughty Pianeza to

his officers. "We must find means to attack them from another quarter. Count Amadeus of Luserna, you are acquainted with the locality. What say you? can any other entrance to the town be found?"

"Yes, your excellency," eagerly replied the count. "Put me at the head of one of these regiments, and I will presently turn the town by the Pelice, fall upon the rear of these barbets, and scatter them like chaff before the wind."

The offer was accepted as eagerly as it had been made, and, while one regiment continued to engage the attention of the Waldenses at the barricade, the other advanced silently through the meadows and orchards that lay between the town and the river, and, entering by another gate, suddenly attacked the besieged in the rear. But, nothing daunted, they turned quickly about, and with a bold charge broke through the ranks of these new assailants, and made good their retreat to the hills, having lost only three men in the whole engagement.

The Papists, now masters of the town, rushed in a body to the Romish church, where they chanted a "Te Deum" amid vehement cries of "Long live the holy Roman Church! hurrah for the holy faith! down with the barbets!"

This was at two o'clock in the morning—Sabbath morning. At five the marquis entered the town with all his nobility, and about the same time Hubert and Pierre reached Martin's cottage, bringing to its inmates the alarming news of the fall of La Tour.

The women listened with pale and anxious faces, and Martin, shaking his head sorrowfully, said, with a deep-drawn sigh, "Surely there can no longer be any

room for doubt as to the designs of our enemies: the warnings of our friends, the menaces of our foes, this attack upon La Tour, the quartering of so many troops in our valleys, all with one voice tell us the same story, that that ancient project—the extermination of the Vaudois—is now to be carried out, unless Providence interpose for our help.”

The two younger men gave a grave and sad assent to his words, and the women asked, with pale and trembling lips, if there were not yet time for some measures to be taken to avert the threatened calamity.

“I hope so,” said Hubert. “We will defend the mountain-passes as well as we can; and, though our foes are as a hundred to one, our cause is just, and God is able to save by many or by few.”

“In him will we put our trust,” said Pierre, “remembering that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.”

“And that his promise to his church is that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” added Martin.

“And,” said Barbara, “that, though persecuted, we are not forsaken.”

Martin opened the Bible, and read aloud a suitable portion of Scripture; then, kneeling, they united their supplications at a throne of grace for themselves and their beloved land.

There was to be service in the church of Angrogna that day; for, to these pious folk, the perilous circumstances in which they were placed seemed an additional incentive for assembling themselves together for the worship of God; and at an early hour, Martin, his daughter, and their guests, with the exception of Madalena, who remained at home to take charge of

the invalid and the little ones, set off in company for the valley.

The situation of the church was lonely and picturesque, and the way to it lay through grand and beautiful scenery; but our friends walked onward in almost unbroken silence, save that now and then a heavy sigh would escape from their bosoms; for the very loveliness of their valleys, arrayed in all the fresh verdure of spring, brought home to them with a keener pang the remembrance of the danger that they might soon see them wasted with fire and sword.

They met Geoffrey with his wife and children, and many others of their friends and neighbors, all wending their way toward the same point; and their mutual greetings were kindly, yet very grave and sad, the women for the most part preserving a mournful silence, while their husbands merely exchanged a few words about the threatened storm, and the best means for averting it, exhorting each other to a firm, unwavering trust in the God of their fathers.

"I am truly glad to be permitted to come up to the courts of the Lord's house once more," remarked another silver-haired patriarch to Martin, as they drew near the church-door together; "for I greatly fear this may be to very many of us the last opportunity we shall enjoy here on earth."

"Yes," replied Martin; "but the Lord grant we may all meet in the sanctuary above!"

"How sweetly solemn is this place!" thought Aline, as she took her seat. "What a precious privilege to be permitted to meet with God's people, knowing that the Master himself is also present! for has he not said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my

name, there am I in the midst of them'? Oh that I could realize his presence more fully!"

The house was filled; and an air of deep solemnity seemed to pervade the whole congregation as the pastor rose and led them in prayer; and while he broke to them the bread of life, they hung upon his words with the most earnest attention. He spoke of the threatened danger to them and their beloved Zion, but reminded them that God was Sovereign of the universe, and nothing could befall them without his will, and that he had promised to preserve his own church in all her perils, and to bring his people off more than conquerors. He exhorted them to have faith in God, to be firm and brave, remembering that Christ had warned his disciples to expect persecution, but had promised to be with them always, even unto the end of the world, and to give them strength according to their day. But, while exhorting them bravely to defend their faith and their families, he entreated them also to show a spirit of forbearance and forgiveness toward their enemies and persecutors.

Ah! even while he thus addressed his flock, some of their brethren in the adjoining valley of Luserna were suffering the loss of all things for Christ.

That very morning, immediately after mass, a party of soldiers under Mario di Bagnolo had set off on a "heretic-hunt,"—that is to say, to shoot as many Waldenses as they could find, and burn their houses; and at this very time they were engaged in their fiendish work.

The services were over, and our friends left the church, feeling that there they had gathered strength for the duties and trials before them. They were pursuing

their way nearly as silently as before, each probably engaged in meditating upon the counsels and instructions to which they had just been listening, when, as they ascended the heights, they were startled by seeing the smoke of burning houses rising from the plain below. Pierre and Aline, who happened to be foremost of the train, were the first to perceive it.

"Look! look, Pierre!" she cried, catching his arm and turning very pale. "See! alas, the work has begun already!"

"Alas, I fear so indeed!" he said, following the direction of her glance. Then, as Martin and Hubert came up behind him, he held a hasty consultation with them, and all three hurried off to join their comrades, leaving the women to go on the remainder of their way alone.

They hastened homewards with all speed, passing on the road men and young lads hurrying down into the valley, or across the heights toward such passes as the enemy would be most likely to enter—and pale-faced, excited women and children, some gathered together in groups, talking in subdued but eager tones, while others were standing apart, gazing mournfully upon the scene of conflagration and devastation spreading over the plain below.

"Let us try to keep it from my poor mother as long as we can," whispered Sara, as they drew near the cottage-door; but the precaution was useless. Susan had heard the unusual sounds of running and calling, and asked at once what it meant, adding, "And you are all looking pale and troubled. I would rather you would not conceal anything from me. I can bear it as well as the rest of you for the Lord will give me strength."

So they told her, and she asked them all to kneel about her bed, and, raising her eyes to heaven, she poured out her soul in prayer that they might all be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" that the Lord would give to each grace to confess him here—even though torture and death should be the consequence—and eternal glory with himself in the world to come.

After that they sat waiting, knowing not what was before them, but each heart sending up its silent petitions, until Martin came to tell them that sentinels had been placed at the advanced points, and small bodies of their militia in the more important passes.

CHAPTER VI.

"What's the business,
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
The sleeper of the house?—speak, speak."

SHAKSPEARE: *Macbeth*.

THEY were sad and anxious faces that gathered about Martin Rostagnol's table the next morning, and the pale and careworn countenances of Madalena and Aline showed that but little sleep had visited their pillows; yet no murmuring word escaped the lips of any, and Martin's prayer, when as a family they approached a throne of grace, was full of faith and submission to the will of God.

He walked out directly afterward, to learn what

changes had taken place during the night, but presently returned, bringing news that all was quiet yet, and accompanied by Pierre and Hubert, who had been doing duty as sentinels on some of the neighboring heights, and, having just been relieved, had now come in to obtain a little refreshment and snatch a few hours of repose.

Sara hastened to spread again the table she had cleared shortly before; and, while she did so, the wives enjoyed a few moments' private converse with their husbands.

"What, dear Hubert, do you think of our situation now?" asked Madalena. "Will there be any more fighting? and will you and Pierre be exposed to danger?" And her voice trembled as she spoke.

"I have no doubt of it, my wife," he said; "but fear not for us: remember that He who guided the arrow shot at a venture, and caused it to enter between the joints of the armor of Israel's wicked king, can also turn aside the bullets of Planeza's men from us, if it be his will; and if not, then, beloved, we but part in this world to meet in another, where sin and sorrow and parting can never come." And he drew her to him with a tender caress.

She could not speak in reply, but laid her head on his shoulder, while the tears fell like rain from her eyes. They were standing apart from the others; Martin had gone to his wife's room, and Barbara was assisting Sara, while Aline and Pierre, in another corner of the apartment, were wholly occupied with each other.

"Don't cry, mother," said little Paul, coming to her side. "Are you sorry father's come back?"

"No, my darling," she answered, gently stroking his

soft hair, "but I grieve that he must leave us again so soon."

Hubert took his boy in his arms, and, pressing him to his heart, said, "My little son, if you should never see me after to-day, remember that you have a Father in heaven, who, if you love and serve him, will never leave nor forsake you."

"I'll not forget it, father," said the child; "but I'll ask God to let you come back again."

"That's right, my son," said Hubert; "ask the Lord for whatever you want, for he is good and kind, and able to do for us more and better than we can ask or think."

Then, setting him down, he took up the infant Blanche, who was seated on the floor at his feet.

"She grows more lovely every day," he said to his wife, as he pressed a tender kiss upon the soft little cheek. "How thankful should we be to our heavenly Father that thus far she has been spared to us!"

"Come, my son," said Barbara, drawing near, "your breakfast is waiting."

"Yes, mother," he said, giving the babe to his wife: "your thoughtful kindness to me seems never wearied."

"The clouds grow blacker day by day, my sons," said Martin, coming in while they were eating.

"Yes," said Pierre, "and, alas! now, when it can no longer be doubted that mischief is intended us, we are but ill prepared to meet it—neither armed nor organized as we should have been."

"And very few and weak in comparison with our foes," said Hubert. "Yet we need not despair; for is anything ~~too~~ hard for the Lord?"

"Nothing, my son," replied the old man ; "and, though he is now, no doubt, chastening us for our sins, yet, if we repent and turn to him with all our heart, he will appear for our deliverance."

The meal was soon dispatched, and the weary men, throwing themselves upon a bed without removing any part of their clothing, for fear of a sudden call to the scene of action, fell almost immediately into a profound slumber.

All was now quiet in Martin's cottage for several hours, when suddenly the sharp, quick report of fire-arms, echoed and re-echoed by the surrounding hills and mountains, brought them all to their feet, and Hubert and Pierre, seizing their guns, rushed from the house.

"Haste ! haste !" cried a young scout, who met them at the threshold ; "we are attacked at all points. It is said that troops are moving simultaneously against us on the heights of La Tour, of San Giovanni, of Angrogna, and of Bricherasco."

He darted away almost before he had finished his sentence, and was quickly followed by every man in the hamlet capable of bearing arms.

The women looked at each other, pale and excited, and Madalena, whose children were sleeping, caught up a shawl, and, throwing it over her head, cried, "Come, let us go out upon the brow of the mountain. We may be able to see the struggle from thence, and, while our husbands and brothers fight, we will hold up their hands with our prayers."

"Do you, Madalena and Mother Barbara and Aline, go," said Sara, kindly, "while I abide by the stuff and watch over my mother and the little ones."

"No," replied Madalena, in a tone of self-reproach ; "I am very selfish : do you and mother and my sister go, and I will stay."

"No," said Sara, with a tear trembling in her eye ; "you and Aline have even more at stake in this struggle than I : your husbands are there, and do you go. It is no trial to me to stay here, and I too will be lifting up my heart to the God of battles on their behalf."

"Nay, my daughters," interposed Barbara, "go all of you, and I will remain ; I can attend to all that is needful here, and I care not to drag my aged limbs to the steeper heights."

Her offer was at once accepted, with thanks, and the three younger women hastened, in company with Martin, to the top of the most elevated point in the neighborhood, whence they had a bird's-eye view of almost the whole contest. They watched with breathless eagerness each attack and repulse, as those whose dearest interests hung upon the result.

The Popish troops far outnumbered the Vaudois, being, even as Hubert had said, as a hundred to one ; but the latter had the advantages of position and of a righteous cause. Their confidence in God was strong ; to him they looked for help, and it was given ; all the attacks upon them failed—the enemy could not drive them from any one of their intrenchments.

The young men did not return again that day ; but in the evening Martin sought them out at their posts and brought back news of their safety ; and the wives and mother lay down to rest with thankful hearts.

The next day all was quiet in their immediate vicinity ; but toward night they learned that two attacks had been made—one upon the Waldenses of San Gio-

vanni, intrenched at Castello, under the command of Captain Grayero, and the other upon those of Tagliarette, in both of which the enemy were defeated, losing in the latter engagement fifty men, while the loss of the Waldenses was only two.

Martin had learned this news from one of the neighbors, and, while he was telling it, Pierre entered, followed shortly afterward by Hubert; but they had only come, as before, for a little rest and refreshment, and about ten o'clock left again for their posts.

Then the family retired, having, as was their inviolable custom, first committed themselves and all their interests to the keeping of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps.

All was quiet within and without, and Madalena, with her babes beside her, slept peacefully. But not so Aline, who shared with Barbara another bed in the same room: she seemed to miss her darling more and more every day, and for hours she lay awake, thinking of him and longing to feel the little head resting against her bosom, or the clasp of his tiny arms about her neck and his soft kisses on her cheek. Nor was it only these yearnings of the bereaved heart for the absent little one that drove sleep from her eyes; for at times anxiety for her husband well-nigh swallowed up every other thought. She had lost one of her heart's best treasures, and that loss but made her tremble the more lest another should follow. But at length she dropped into an uneasy slumber; yet only to be quickly startled from it by the sound of a trumpet-blast, which seemed to come from the vicinity of the nearest intrenchment of the Vaudois, and was instantly followed by another and another farther and farther away among the hills

She sprang from her bed, and, as Barbara and Madalena also started up, asked, hastily, "What does it mean? what can have happened?"

But they were as ignorant as herself; though Barbara suggested that it was probably a summons from the marquis to the Vaudois to surrender.

"But they will not!" exclaimed Aline, excitedly; "they *will* not! they *dare* not! for what would it be but placing themselves at the mercy of a foe who knows not the meaning of the word? Oh, my husband! the cowardly assassins may be even now imbruing their hands in his blood!" And she hid her face and shuddered.

"Nay, my dear child," said Barbara, soothingly, "do not give way to such fears, so unworthy of a soldier's wife, herself a soldier of the cross: remember he, as well as the rest of us, is in the hands of God."

While they talked, Madalena was dressing quietly, but with great dispatch, and, though her heart beat wildly, she said not a word. But a light step was heard on the stairs, the door opened gently, and Sara entered.

"Ah, you are all up, I see," she said, speaking in an undertone, for fear of waking the children. "I thought you had probably been roused by the trumpets and would feel alarmed; but my father thinks, as there has been no sound of fighting for many hours, it can be nothing worse than a summons to our troops to surrender. He has gone out, though, to inquire, and in the mean time it would, perhaps, be as well for us to dress, though it still wants two hours to daybreak. But I would not disturb the little ones yet, Madalena," she added, seeing the latter look wistfully at her babes.

"No, I will not," replied Madalena, in a low tone; but she made every other preparation for speedy flight in case of necessity.

She had scarcely finished, when Martin returned to quiet their apprehensions with the intelligence that what they had heard was the announcement of the marquis, by sound of trumpet at each of the Waldensian intrenchments, that he was now ready to receive deputies with whom to treat for an accommodation in the name of the Duke of Savoy.

"Then we may hope that this dreadful state of affairs is at last coming to an end," said Aline, with a sigh of relief.

"The Lord grant it, if it be his will!" said Martin, gravely. "May he give wisdom and prudence to those who shall be appointed to treat with the foe, and to all of us!"

"Amen!" ejaculated Barbara, fervently.

Though it was still so early, no one thought of going to bed again, and Martin, opening the Bible, read aloud the eighth chapter of Romans; and, oh, with what a tone of exultant joy did he pronounce the words of the last few verses, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" etc.; and then, as they all knelt about him, he poured out a prayer full of faith and hope, and of rejoicing in the many great and precious promises of God's holy word.

Hubert came in as they sat down to breakfast.

"My husband?" gasped Aline, as she saw that he was alone.

"Pierre is safe and well, dear sister," said Hubert, kindly, "but is assisting to guard an important pass, and cannot come in until I return to relieve him. So

I am to take a few hours' repose, and then he will do the same. He insisted that, as I am a little the elder of the two, I should take my turn first."

"What is now to be done?" asked Martin. "Deputies will be appointed, no doubt, in compliance with the proposal of the marquis."

"Yes," replied Hubert, "one from each commune; and God grant they may treat wisely with our wily foe!"

At noon Hubert returned to his post, and Pierre came in, bringing the news that deputies had been appointed and sent to La Tour to treat with the marquis.

All seemed quiet during the afternoon: Martin had gone out directly after dinner, Pierre was sleeping off his fatigue in an upper chamber, and the women and children were all gathered in Susan's room; for, when not suffering too much, she loved to have them all about her, and not one of the group was more calm and full of confidence in God than she.

At length Martin and Hubert came in together, both looking grave and sad.

"What news?" asked the women, breathlessly.

"You tell them, Hubert; you can do it better than I," said Martin.

"All seems to be going well," said Hubert, heaving an involuntary sigh. "Our deputies were received by the marquis with the greatest urbanity, and were invited to dine with him, which they did, and found themselves most hospitably entertained. He conversed with them for a considerable time, and assured them of the most friendly views toward us; said that the order issued by Gastaldo on the 25th of January referred only to the Vaudois of the lower valleys, whom

it was deemed expedient to remove into the mountains, but that the communes of the upper valleys had nothing whatever to fear. He also expressed the greatest regret for the excesses committed by his soldiers, imputing them entirely to the difficulty of enforcing discipline on so large a body of troops, and adding that it was for that very reason he wished to distribute them. He represented that we would be doing a personal favor to our sovereign by receiving each commune a single regiment, and expressed his conviction that the duke, touched with so great a mark of confidence, would be induced to recall the decree affecting the Vaudois of the plains."

"And do you think he will, Hubert?" asked Madalena, eagerly.

"I cannot tell, dear wife," he replied, in a tone of sadness and doubt; "but we will soon know; for, though both Captain Gianavel and the Barba Leger opposed it most strenuously, the communes have consented to receive the troops."

"And you do not approve of it?" she said, with an anxious, inquiring look.

"No, my Madalena," he replied, "I cannot but think, with Gianavel and Leger, that it is unwise, because it places us entirely at the mercy of a foe who has vowed our destruction. They have tried force, and failed; and if they are now trying perfidy, it will not be the first time that Rome has done so."

"And you, father,—what do you think?" asked Sara.

"I scarce know what to think, my daughter," he replied. "I would be slow to impute bad motives to the marquis; and yet I much fear we have acted unwisely in yielding to his demand."

A deep hush fell upon the circle, every face wearing a sad, anxious look. Susan's voice broke the silence.

" 'The Lord is my light and my salvation,' " she said; " 'whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?' Let us, dear husband, daughter, and friends, like the disciples of old, take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, and of our lives also, if it come to that; for 'we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Shall we count it a great thing even if we be called to die for Him who so freely laid down his life for us? Nay, let us rather rejoice and give thanks that unto us it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

Sara now rose, and left the room, to prepare the evening meal; and when it was nearly ready, Aline called her husband.

"Have our deputies returned, Hubert?" he asked, as they began their meal.

"They have," replied his brother; and he went on to repeat the information he had already given the others.

Aline watched her husband's face anxiously while he listened, and from its grave and troubled expression gathered the conviction that he took the same view of the case that Hubert did.

On rising from the table, the three men walked out to the brow of the mountain, and, while Aline assisted Sara with the evening work, Madalena began, as usual, to prepare her children for bed. But a vague fear stopped her.

"Mother," she said, turning to Barbara, who sat near by, with her knitting in her hand, "I believe I will not undress them to-night."

"It may be as well not," assented Barbara; "for, at all events, it can hardly injure them to pass one night in their clothes."

It was not yet dark, and Martin, Hubert, Pierre, and many others, stood looking down into the valleys, watching the movements of the Popish troops, who were already installing themselves in the Vaudois villages and houses.

"Look!" exclaimed Pierre, suddenly. "A detachment is ascending Campo la Rama and Costa Rossina, on their way to Pra del Tor, no doubt. Truly they are in haste to take possession of our strongholds."

"It looks not well," replied Hubert; "and, see! there is smoke rising from the direction of Tagliarette; they have set the village on fire; and surely I hear cries as of pursuers and pursued; and yonder flashes a signal-fire on Rorata! Alas, I fear all is indeed lost!"

"And see!" cried Pierre; "the regiment of Grancey advances upon Angrogna from one side, while yonder detachment descends the opposite hill."

"Haste! let us also light our signal!" cried several voices; and it was scarcely sooner said than done, while at the same instant cries of "To Perosa!" "To Perosa!" "To La Vachera!" "Treachery!" spread like electric flames along the mountain-slopes.

"Hark! what was that? What mean those cries?" exclaimed Madalena, in alarm, as, catching her babe to her bosom, she rushed to the door, closely followed by Barbara, Sara, and Aline.

They met Martin and the two younger men on the threshold, all pale and breathless with running.

"All is lost!" they cried. "We are betrayed, and nothing but instant flight will save us!"

"But whither, whither shall we fly?" asked the excited women.

"To La Vachera," was the reply, "and thence to Perosa; for, belonging to France, it will be a safe asylum for the present at least."

"It would be impossible to remove my mother; and I will never leave her," said Sara, with calm determination. "I hope they will not have the cruelty to harm helpless females; and, if they do, we will die together." And, hastening to the bed where the invalid lay, she sat down by her side, clasping the wasted hand in hers, and gazing with the tenderest affection into the wan face, with its sunken features and hollow eyes.

"Nay, Sara, go," said her mother; "my life is worth but little to me or any one else; but not so with yours. Go, and let me die alone, if such be the will of God."

"No, mother, I entreat you bid me not," she pleaded, "for I cannot do it. But, father, do you go; they are less likely to spare men than women."

"Men who have youth and strength, and are capable of resistance," he replied, "but not those who are old and feeble. I will stay too, for if they spare you they will spare me also; and I wish not to survive you. Hubert and Pierre," he added, turning to them, "it is time you were withdrawing, with the other men capable of bearing arms, to the heights of La Vachera. Do not delay another moment. I will bring out the mules,

and see your families started on their way ; and I trust you will be able to join them at Perosa in safety."

"Thank you," they replied, hastily embracing their dear ones.

"Mother and Madalena," said Hubert, "delay is dangerous. Make all haste to Perosa by the way of La Vaehera, whither we will precede you and see that all is safe. Mount the two mules ; they are sure-footed, and will carry you out of the reach of the enemy in a few hours. You will not be able to take anything with you but a few changes of clothing for yourselves and the children. Madalena, I need not remind you to protect them well from the cold."

He strained her to his heart again for one instant, and was gone, in company with Pierre, who with difficulty tore himself away from the arms of his weeping wife, who elung to him as though never expecting to see him more.

Madalena, feeling that there was no time for the indulgence of grief, dashed away the tears that filled her eyes, hastily gathered up the few articles she could take with her, and with the assistance of Barbara, who, though pale, was perfectly calm and collected, quickly prepared herself and her children for the journey. Nor did Aline indulge her grief immoderately, but, choking back her sobs and tears, she too gave herself with energy to the work of preparation for their departure ; and in a very few moments, having bidden a tearful and affectionate farewell to their hospitable entertainers, they, in company with many other fugitives from Popish intolerance, were fleeing over the rocks and snows to the French valley of Perosa,—Barbara mounted on one of the mules and Madalena, with her

babe in her arms, seated behind her, while Aline rode the other and carried little Paul.

The darkness, the steepness and narrowness of the path, leading sometimes along the edge of frightful precipices, the depth of the snow, and the bitter cold on the mountain-tops, rendered it a fearful journey, and the night one to be remembered during the rest of their lives. But Perosa was at last reached in safety; and there a cordial welcome and sincere sympathy from their brethren in the faith awaited all the poor wanderers. All had suffered much from fatigue and cold, and for a time Madalena's children were quite ill from the effects; but a few weeks saw them entirely restored to health.

CHAPTER VII.

"Oh! for the deed of blood and crime the heavens looked down on then,

The painter's art no pencil hath—the poet's hand no pen!

Father and children, mother, babes, together they must fall.

They sought no mercy, no reprieve—too blest if death were all!

To speak the deeds that morning done, no human lips may try;

Man dare not tell what man dare do 'neath his Creator's eye.

Some fearful hours—a ery of blood to Heaven—and all was o'er!

But woe to them by whom that deed was done, for evermore!"

WHILE Hubert and Pierre stood watching the movements of the Popish troops on that eventful evening, Geoffrey and a number of his companions-in-arms were doing the same thing on a neighboring height. They, too, saw the smoke of the burning village and the

signal-fire suddenly blazing out on the hill of Rorata, and joined with their brethren in the warning cry of "Treachery!" and Geoffrey, turning to his son, who stood by his side, exclaimed, "Run, Louis, to your mother, and tell her it is my advice that she flee instantly to Perosa with you and the little ones. The men capable of bearing arms must keep together, and I cannot go to her now; but if she will but flee at once, without a *moment's* delay, I think she will reach there in safety, and to-morrow I hope to meet her again.

"Haste, Louis, haste," he added, "and may the God of our fathers watch over and protect you all!"

Like an arrow from the bow, the boy sped down the mountain-side, nor once stopped, nor looked behind him, until he had reached the village; but there his progress was stayed for a time. Pianeza's troops were just entering it, with the marquis at their head, and the boy found himself forced to step back into the angle of a wall and wait until they had passed. They were savage-looking men, and as their murderous glances fell upon him, and he heard now and then a muttered threat, he pressed closer to the wall, and trembled with fear, but more for his mother and his little brother and sister than for himself. To the anxious, excited boy they seemed very long in passing, though it was in reality but a very few moments ere they had scattered themselves over the whole town, every family being called upon to quarter several of them; and when at length Louis reached the cottage where his mother had taken up her temporary abode, he found half a dozen of them in the family sitting-room, laughing and talking with rude, noisy mirth,

calling vociferously for the best the house afforded, and indulging in many coarse jests at the expense of Catalan Goneto and his wife, and the pretty Bianca, whose bright black eyes were suffused with tears and her modest cheeks dyed with blushes at their insults.

But Louis neither heard nor heeded their words at that moment; his one anxiety was to get to his mother as quickly as possible. Her room was in the second story; and as the stairs were on the outside, leading to a gallery upon which the upper chambers opened, he fortunately succeeded in reaching it unobserved. The room had a very neat and pleasant look as Louis opened the door; but on the bed at the farther side a little girl lay tossing about in a burning fever, moaning and sighing with pain, while the mother sat by her side, bathing her burning brow, and trying to soothe her with gentle, loving words.

Martha turned her head as her son entered, and he beckoned with his hand for her to come to him, at the same time glancing rather uneasily at an older girl, who sat on the floor near the bed, with a babe on her lap, whom she was doing her best to amuse and keep quiet, that her sick sister might not be disturbed, though murmuring to herself, the while, "It's very little use; for poor Maria can't find any ease for her head while those cruel soldiers will make so much noise down-stairs."

The mother rose at once, and, crossing the room to where Louis stood, "What is the matter, my son?" she asked, in an undertone. "Why are you so agitated? and what meant those signal-fires on the heights, and the cries I heard but now of—as it seemed to me—'Perosa!' and 'Treachery'?"

"It was treachery, mother," he said, hurriedly; "we have been betrayed, and must fly instantly to Perosa." And he hastened to give her his father's message, in the very words Geoffrey had used.

His mother was very pale when he had finished, and an expression of bitter anguish passed over her features as she glanced from one to another of her helpless children; for she felt that she was powerless to save them.

"Oh, mother," whispered Louis, "delay not a moment, or we may be lost. I will go and put the mule to the cart, while you get yourself and the children ready. But where is Philip?" he asked, with an anxious glance about the room.

"Asleep," said his mother, pointing to a little heap in one corner, which he had overlooked in the gathering gloom, for the sun had set some time before, and it was now growing dark.

"Oh!" he said, with a sigh of relief, and was turning to the door again; but his mother laid her hand on his arm.

"It is useless, my son," she said, in a calm, quiet tone. "Maria is much too ill to be moved. But stay," she added, as if struck by a sudden thought. "You may get the cart ready, and you shall fly with the others."

"And leave you and Maria to die alone, mother?" he exclaimed. "No, never!"

"Not to save Philip and your other sisters?" she said. "But I will not urge you; for surely they will not harm defenseless women and children."

"Mother," exclaimed the boy, earnestly, "have you forgotten the four hundred infants found suffocated in their cradles, or in the arms of their dead mothers, in

the cavern of Ailfrede? and is not Popery the same to-day that it was then? Oh, mother, be warned in time!"

"Louis, my dear boy, would you have me to go and leave her, my sick and suffering child? or take her along to die on the way?" she asked, pointing to the bed.

"It is a hard choice, mother; but better so than that she and all of us stay here to be murdered," replied Louis, with a shudder.

A step was at that moment heard on the gallery without, and Catalan opened the door, and came in.

"Don't be frightened, Martha," he said, closing it cautiously behind him; "for though the people on the heights have become alarmed, and are fleeing to La Vachera and Perosa, the marquis assures us that no harm is intended us, and that we have nothing to fear. I myself heard the assurance from his own lips; and, indeed, the soldiers, though somewhat noisy and impudent, do not seem inclined to commit any outrage."

"Thank God!" ejaculated Martha, fervently, while tears of joy and gratitude chased each other down her cheeks.

Louis was only half satisfied; but he said no more, and contented himself with keeping close to his mother and sisters, with the boyish feeling that his presence was a protection.

All was quiet and peaceful during the night; and the next day, Pianeza renewing his assurances that no harm was intended them, the deluded people—only women and children, and a few old men—began to feel confidence in his word, and some of them even sent, as he urged them to do, to recall their husbands

and fathers, a few of whom actually returned. *Alas* for them!

But Louis could not feel the confidence that others did: he was a thoughtful boy, and the story of past events in the history of his much-persecuted people was too deeply engraven on his memory to be easily forgotten; he knew that Popery had ever been treacherous, and that there was no reason to believe her changed; and hence he watched with almost feverish anxiety for a favorable alteration in Maria, hoping that even yet they might be able to flee before the blow should fall; but with a sinking heart he perceived that her symptoms grew more and more unfavorable.

"Louis," his mother said to him, toward noon, "your father will be very anxious when he finds we are not among the fugitives at Perosa. Had you not better go and assure him of our safety?"

"And urge him to return, mother, as the marquis wishes?" asked the boy, raising his dark eyes inquiringly to her face.

"No, Louis, not that," she answered, quickly, "but rather entreat him to remain where he is. I hope we are in no danger, but I would risk as little as possible; and, if our destruction is intended, his presence would be no protection against foes so numerous and powerful. He could only share our fate; which God forbid!"

"Mother," said Louis, sadly, "I cannot bear to leave you; you need my help in waiting on poor Maria and caring for the little ones. Lucia must not go down among those rude men, and Philip is quite too young to do your errands. Will it not answer if I send a ~~message~~ message to my father by some one who is going?"

"Yes, I think it will," she replied; and he left the room to attend to it.

The next morning Maria seemed a little better, and Louis's hopes rose; but toward evening the fever came on again with increased violence, and his heart sank. His mother, seeing it, said, gently, "'Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.' It is the Lord who sends this sickness, my dear son, and we must try to be patient and submissive. Yes, 'it is the Lord, and let him do what seemeth him good.'"

"How is the dear child to-night?" asked Bianca, coming in and seating herself at the foot of the bed. "Not much better, I'm afraid."

"Not quite so well as she was this morning; but I hope she will be better again to-morrow," replied the mother, trying to speak cheerfully.

"You are worn out with nursing," said Bianca. "Will you not let me take your place and watch by her to-night?"

"Oh, no, mother! don't leave me!" exclaimed Maria, pleadingly. "You can lie down beside me and sleep, and I will try to be very patient and quiet."

"Do not fear; I will not leave you, my poor darling," said the mother, giving her a gentle kiss.

"You are crowded here," said Bianca, glancing around the little apartment, "and I think you had better let me take Philip into my bed for to-night."

Bianca had from the first been very kind to Martha and her children, especially to little Philip, a pretty and engaging boy of three, of whom she made a great pet, and who had become very fond of her. Philip was sometimes wakeful in the night, and disturbed the

sick child with his prattle; their room was very full, too, as Bianca had remarked; and so the mother thankfully accepted her offer, feeling that he would be as safe with the kind-hearted girl as with herself.

The cottage was much crowded by the quartering of the troops upon them, and Bianca had been obliged to give up her ordinary sleeping-apartment and content herself with a bed spread upon the floor of a closet that opened into the kitchen, which, as well as every other room in the house except those occupied by Catalan and his wife and Martha and her children, was filled with soldiers. The wall which separated her from them was not very thick, and many an oath, obscene word, and ribald jest had pained the ears of the modest and pious Vaudois girl on the two previous nights; and, lest little Philip should hear them too, she took care that he should be fast asleep before she carried him away from his mother's room.

A trooper was seated by the fire, smoking his pipe, as she passed through the kitchen, and something in the look of mingled malice and triumph which he gave her aroused her suspicions, and led her rather to listen to their talk that night than, as heretofore, to strive to shut her ears against it. But they spoke in undertones; and it was only by putting her ear to the crack beneath the door that she was able now and then to catch a word or so; but words they were of such fearful import as to increase almost to certainty her fears that some terrible blow was about to fall upon her people. "Massacre," "The signal," "Tower of St. Mary's," "Down with the Barbetti," "Four o'clock," "Plunder,"—these, and others of a like import, almost froze the blood in the poor girl's veins with fear and horror

But at length the voices ceased, one after another, and no sound was heard but the deep breathing of heavy sleepers. Yet Bianca slept not. First kneeling on the floor, she lifted up her heart in silent prayer for help; then, laying herself down beside the unconscious child, she calmly considered what would be her best course of action. She first thought of escaping by the window of her closet, which looked out into the little inclosure behind the house, and fleeing at once to the mountains with little Philip in her arms; but, reflecting that she had heard nothing to give her a clew to the appointed day for the massacre, she determined to wait until morning, that, if possible, she might find an opportunity to warn the others of the impending danger. But she would not undress for the night, nor suffer her eyes to close in sleep; and, very gently and carefully, she put Philip's clothes on him, succeeding in doing so without rousing him from his sleep, which, providentially, was unusually sound that night. This done, she seated herself close to the door and once more applied her ear to the crack; but for a long time she heard nothing save the song of the cricket on the hearth and the heavy breathing of the troopers; then a voice spoke so close to her that she gave an involuntary start.

"I dreamed the signal had been given, and we were already engaged in converting these heretics with our good broadswords," it said; and, by the sound, the speaker seemed to start up to a sitting posture as he spoke. "What say you, comrade? has the hour arrived?"

"No," growled another voice: "look at the moon. It can't be more than three o'clock, at farthest; and we

may sleep another hour ere we're called to rouse these cursed barbets from their beds."

"One hour!—only one hour!" groaned Bialca to herself. "O God of our fathers, send help!"

For a few moments she sat with her face buried in her hands, pleading silently—but, oh, how earnestly!—for herself and for her people. Then calmly she laid her plans and made her few preparations for flight. She could not warn the others, for it was impossible to gain the stairs leading to the upper story without either passing through the kitchen or directly in front of its windows, and, besides, she knew that a sentinel was on guard on that side of the house; but she could at least try to save her own life and Philip's. She knew a cave some distance farther up the mountain, and thither she determined to fly with the child, and lie there in concealment until she could with safety make her way over the rocks and snow to Perosa; for it would be madness to attempt it now, with the Popish troops murdering and pillaging in every direction. But she and the boy would need food to keep them alive in their hiding-place; and providentially it was at hand; there were cakes and bread on the shelves over her head, and, rising softly, she filled an ample pocket, which she wore at her side, with the cakes, and laid a loaf close to the window, which she cautiously opened, after putting on a hood and shawl that hung behind the door, and wrapping Philip in the blanket that had covered him through the night. Then, with a fervent prayer that he might sleep on until they were out of hearing of the soldiers, she clambered out with him in her arms, reached in and took the loaf, and, holding both fast, fled noiselessly across the garden and on up

the mountain-side, scarce venturing to draw a long breath until she found herself safe with her precious burden in the recesses of the damp, dark cavern.

Philip still slept soundly, and she sat down on the rocky floor with him in her arms, while, trembling, panting, and shivering with cold and fear, she sent up her silent petitions on behalf of those she had left behind.

For a short space all was silent, within and without; then suddenly a red glare lit up the morning sky, making its way through a crevice in the rock and faintly illuminating the cavern, while at the same instant shouts and yells of rage and triumph, mingled with shrieks of pain and fear and anguish and cries for mercy, came up from the vale below, and from the slopes of the hills and mountains.

Shuddering with horror, Bianca laid the child gently down on the floor, with the blanket still wrapped about him, and, drawing near to the crevice, she gazed down into the valley. The day had but just begun to dawn; but here and there a dwelling had been fired, and by the light of their burning homes she could see her friends and neighbors fleeing from place to place, pursued by the brutal soldiery, who showed no mercy, but shot down or ran through with their swords alike defenseless old men and helpless women and children. At that distance, and in the uncertain light, she could not distinguish one victim from another; but she saw that a terrible and indiscriminate slaughter was going on, and her heart was rent with anguish for their sufferings, while at the same time it was sending up fervent thanksgivings for her own and little Philip's escape. For more than an hour she stood there, watching, listening,

weeping, and praying; but the greater part of the savage work was quickly done: soldiers had been quartered in every house, and, instructed beforehand, all, at the giving of the appointed signal, fell at once upon their innocent and unsuspecting victims, under the shelter of whose roofs they had been sleeping, and whose hospitality they had enjoyed for the last two or three days; and soon the cries grew fewer and fainter, for to many the blessed relief of death had come; but ever and anon a new wail of anguish would burst forth from some poor agonized creature to whom more lingering tortures were meted out by those bloodthirsty emissaries of the Papacy—that “mother of harlots, drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”

Little Philip began to stir, and Bianca turned to speak to him, when the sound of gruff voices and hasty footsteps drawing near the cavern made her sink on her knees, trembling and shaking with terror, and, catching the astonished and frightened child in her arms, she strained him to her breast, whispering in his ear, “Oh, Philip, darling, don’t move or speak one word, or those wicked men will find and kill us.”

The little fellow heard and understood, faint and low as her whisper was, and, clasping his arms tightly about the girl’s neck, he remained perfectly still and quiet.

“Curse the jade! where can she have gone to?”

It was the voice of the trooper whose malicious glance the night before had roused Bianca’s suspicions and thus become the indirect means of her escape; and the words came distinctly to her ear, accompanied by a ~~voide~~ of fearful oaths and terrible threats of the tor-

tures he would inflict upon her if he could but discover her place of concealment.

Bianca neither spoke nor moved ; she scarcely dared to breathe ; but her arms tightened their clasp about the child, while her quaking heart sent up its agonized cry for help to Him who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

The steps passed on ; the voices presently died away in the distance ; and the poor girl sank half fainting upon the earth, trembling and weeping with horror and fear.

"Dear Bianca, don't cry," whispered Philip ; "but, tell me, why are we here in the dark and cold ?"

"To hide from those cruel men who want to kill us, dear," she said ; "and we must keep very still and quiet till we are quite sure that they have gone far away."

"I will," he said, submissively. "But where is mother ? And where are Louis and my sisters ?"

"I don't know, darling," she answered, weeping afresh, and kissing him tenderly again and again.

Alas ! where were they ? Scarcely half an hour after Bianca's flight, Martha, who had fallen into a doze after hours of wakeful watching by the side of her sick child, was roused by a red glare of light and the noise of a sudden commotion in the kitchen, which was directly beneath her, followed instantly by hasty steps on the stairs and gallery without—then a shriek, a struggle, and a cry for mercy, coming from the room occupied by Catalan and his wife, while at the same moment similar sounds resounded from all the neighboring houses, accompanied with oaths and curses and yells of savage delight.

Martha sprang to her feet with an instant comprehension of the cause of all these frightful sounds,—the terrible calamity that had befallen them; and, sending up an earnest cry for strength to meet her trial, to “glorify the Lord in the fires,” being “found faithful even unto death,” she turned with a look of calm composure to the soldiers who now burst into the room, and, waving their swords, reeking with the blood of their aged victims, above her head, commanded her to abjure or die.

“I can die, but I cannot deny my Lord,” she said, clasping her hands and raising her eyes to heaven, “lest in that last great day he should deny me before his Father and all the holy angels.”

“Ah! but they say there are some things worse than death,” replied one of the soldiers, with a savage grin; and, seizing Maria by the hair, he dragged her from the bed, and in a moment laid her, a bloody corpse, at her mother’s feet.

“God forgive you!” groaned Martha, catching her babe to her bosom, and sinking on her knees beside the body, while Lucia elung to her, screaming with affright, and Louis, springing from his bed in the farther corner of the room, rushed to her assistance, only to be instantly knocked down by another of the troopers, and laid bleeding and apparently lifeless beside his sister.

“Now, woman, will you abjure and go to mass?” asked the first. “Speak quickly, or the other two are as dead as these.”

“Never!” replied Martha, firmly; though anguish was written on every line of her face.

“Then here goes!” he cried, with a terrible oath; and, tearing the babe from her death-like grasp, he cut

its throat, and tossed it through the window into the road below.

Martha bowed her head upon her breast, with a heart-rending groan, and, with her arms closely clasped about her one remaining child, awaited the coming blow. She had not long to wait: it was but a moment ere the bloody deed was finished and two more bodies were added to the gory heap, while two more blessed spirits were winging their happy flight to heaven; for, young as Louis and his sisters were, the prayers of their pious parents on their behalf had been answered, and they had learned to know and love the Lord.

In this account of the massacre of Martha and her children I have drawn but a very faint picture of the horrible atrocities to which these dear people of God were subjected by their Popish persecutors on that 24th of April, 1655. I could tell of cruelties that would sicken the very soul of the reader; but I forbear: they are too painful either to write or to read. Suffice it to say that it was in both of those lovely valleys—Luserna and Angrogna—a scene of indiscriminate slaughter, neither age nor sex being spared; while in multitudes of cases the most lingering and inhuman tortures that the hellish rage and malice of their foes could contrive were inflicted; and that to the sword of the assassin succeeded the torch of the incendiary; and so thoroughly was the savage work done that in several communes not a single cottage was left standing, and, as Leger expresses it, the “fair valley of Luserna resembled a burning furnace, whence cries fewer and fainter attested that a people had lived.”

And yet they might have escaped all these torments had they but consented to abjure their faith;

but truly "they loved not their lives unto the death," but "counted *all things* but *loss* that they might win Christ and be found in him."

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life." For more than two hundred years that eternal life has been theirs; and, terrible as their sufferings were for a brief space, think you, dear reader, they regret the choice they made?

* See Appendix, Note B.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies."—LAM. iii. 32.

"Praise to our Father—God,
High praise in solemn lay,
Alike for what his hand hath given
And what it takes away."

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

THE assassins in Catalan's cottage had not, however, done their fiendish work quite so thoroughly as they supposed, and Louis, though struck down senseless by a terrible blow on the head, still lived. A breathing form amid a heap of slain, he lay utterly unconscious through the long hours of the day; but at length the sun went down, and the cool night air, blowing in at the open window, roused him from his death-like stupor. He opened his eyes to find the moon shining full in his face; and as he looked up at her sailing along the sky, he wondered, for a moment, where he was and what had happened,—what was the heavy weight pressing down his limbs so that he seemed utterly unable to move them. But one glance around—one sight of the calm, peaceful face of his dead mother, who lay close to him—brought it all back to his recollection, and he closed his eyes and groaned aloud. Then, struck with a sudden and terrible fear that some assassin might yet be prowling about in the vicinity, he lay perfectly quiet, listening intently, and scarcely daring to breathe, but unable to hear anything but the loud beating of his

own heart ; all else was silent ; the stillness of death apparently reigned supreme within and without ; and, reassured at length, he again ventured to open his eyes ; then, with an earnest prayer for help, he strove to release himself from the fearful burdens that pressed him down.

His efforts were but feeble, for loss of blood and long fasting had made him very weak ; but, after several trials, he at last succeeded. For a moment he lay panting on the floor, then rose up to flee ; for he well knew that only death awaited him where he was, while in speedy flight there yet remained some small chance of life. But, ere he went, he stooped and closely examined each loved form, in the vain hope that in one or more a spark of life might yet be lingering. Alas, no ! They were all stiff and cold in death. Fondly, and with fast-flowing tears, he embraced each one ; but over his mother he lingered as if he could never tear himself away. No wound disfigured her face, and never had she looked more lovely in her son's eyes. She seemed not like one dead, but in a calm and peaceful slumber, disturbed by no troubled dreams, but sweetly resting in the arms of some dear friend.

"She sleeps in Jesus," murmured the boy, pressing passionate kisses on her eyes, her forehead, her cheeks and lips. "'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.' But oh, my mother, my mother ! would God I had died for thee ! How will my poor father bear it ? How can I bear to behold his grief and despair ?"

But her own sweet voice seemed to come to him through the stillness, saying, "My son, God will lay upon his children no greater burden than he gives them strength to bear. 'As one whom his mother comfort-

eth, so will he comfort his chosen people,'—yea, even so will he comfort thee and thy beloved father."

"Yes, I know it—I believe it, dearest mother," he answered, as though she had really spoken, and could hear his reply; "and even now I can rejoice and thank God that he has taken you to that blessed land where sin and sorrow and death can never come."

With another passionate embrace, he tore himself away; but, as he again turned to flee, some small object, glittering in the moonbeams on the other side of the room, attracted his attention, and, going to it, he found it to be a pair of scissors in his mother's work-basket. Taking them up, he quickly severed a lock of hair from each dear head, and stowing them carefully in his breast, and snatching up a shawl of his mother's that lay on the foot of her bed—for he was shivering in the keen night air—he wrapped it about him, and glided softly out upon the gallery and down the stairs, shuddering with horror as he passed Catalan's chamber-door and saw him and his wife lying there covered with gore, then glancing fearfully around to see if any lurking foe were on the watch to shoot him down or spring out upon him with a bloody sword. But he reached the ground in safety, and, stepping into the shadow of the stairway, stood still for a moment, listening, and trembling with fear and cold. A distant sound of gruff voices came to his ear, but all was quiet in his immediate vicinity. The kitchen-door stood open, and, glancing timidly in, he saw that the soldiers had deserted it; and, as a thought of Philip and Bianca came to his mind, he hurried in to look for them.

"Bianca is killed, no doubt," he said to himself, with a shudder, "and Philip and the baby either that, or

carried off; but I cannot content myself to leave the house without first searching for them."

But there was no trace of them there,—the moon gave sufficient light for him to see that almost at a glance,—and, quickly crossing to the farther side of the room, he looked into Bianca's closet. It, too, was deserted; no one was there, either living or dead; but he found food—only some broken bits left by the soldiers, but a rich treasure to the famishing boy. He hastily gathered them up, took a long draught from a jug of milk, and, hearing steps and voices approaching the front of the house, darted out of the back door, and fled, thanking God fervently that at that moment the moon, which had before been shining brightly, passed under a thick cloud. But his small stock of strength was soon spent, and he sank down behind a rock, panting and trembling with fatigue and fear; with cold too, for, in spite of the shawl, which he wrapped closely about him, the wind, coming down from the snow-covered mountains, seemed to penetrate to his very bones.

Not long had he lain in his retreat when a sudden blaze of light lit up the landscape, and, peering cautiously over the top of the rock, he saw the flames bursting from the doors, the windows, and the roof of Catalan's cottage. He sank down again, shuddering with horror, and thanking God that he had so narrowly escaped an awful death. Other houses were in flames also, and the fiendish work went on until every dwelling in the village had been fired. Louis crouched trembling in his hiding-place, and did not venture to leave it until the cottage which had been his home for so many weeks had become a mere mass of smouldering

ruins, and the shouts of the incendiaries had died away in the distance as they passed on to repeat their savage deeds in some other quarters ; but then, with a prayer for protection and guidance, the boy sped up the mountain-side as fast as his failing strength would permit. He paused, at length, and leaned, panting, against a rock ; but, little guessing that it concealed the opening to a cave in which Bianca and his little brother Philip at that very moment lay quietly sleeping, he soon passed on again toward La Vachera, not daring to linger long so near his bloodthirsty foes.

Meantime, some who had escaped the slaughter had carried the dreadful news to Perosa, and Geoffrey, half distracted with grief, had, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friends on the danger and utter uselessness of such an undertaking, set out on his return to Angrogna to search for any member of his family who might yet survive. He was ascending La Vachera on the side nearest Perosa, when a dark object, lying on the snow not far from the path, attracted his attention, and, stopping to examine it, he found it to be a young boy, who seemed to have sunk down from exhaustion and cold. The lad was past speaking, and it was too dark for Geoffrey to distinguish his features ; but, kneeling on the snow by his side, he gently raised him up, and held a small flask of wine to his lips, saying, " Drink, my poor lad, and it will revive you."

The boy swallowed a few drops, though with some difficulty, and Geoffrey set down the flask to rub his chilled limbs ; but, the moon at that instant bursting from under a cloud, he caught sight of the lad's face, and, suddenly clasping him in his arms, he strained him to his heart, crying, in a transport of mingled joy

and grief, "Louis, Louis, my son, my beloved son! Thank God that one at least has been spared to me!"

The sudden joy of finding himself in his father's arms had a more reviving effect upon Louis than even the wine, and, clinging convulsively to him, he laid his head down upon his shoulder and wept long and passionately.

But at length Geoffrey could bear the suspense no longer. "What of thy mother, my son?" he asked, in tones trembling with apprehension; "my wife,—my daughters,—my little Philip?"

"Father," said the boy, lifting up a face pale with grief and anguish, "it is written, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord;' and 'them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.'"

A bitter, heart-rending groan was the only response for a moment, and then the pious Vaudois, lifting his streaming eyes to heaven, said, "'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.'"

"Father," whispered Louis, "was it the Lord?"

"Yes, my son: did not Jesus himself say, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered'? And David says, 'Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.' I could not bear it, my son, oh! I could not bear it, if I did not know that it was the Lord's hand that dealt the blow; but, blessed be his holy name, his grace is still sufficient for me!"

There was now no reason why Geoffrey should continue his journey to Angrogna; and, as soon as Louis was sufficiently recovered to travel, they turned their

faces toward Perosa and descended the mountain together, Louis, the while, giving his father a detailed account of all that had occurred during their separation, as far as he knew it himself.

"Then you know not certainly the fate of my little Philip and his baby sister, Louis?" remarked the father, in a tone of anguish, as his son finished his narrative. "Alas! I fear they have been reserved for a fate far worse than death,—even to be brought up in the errors of Popery." And he bowed his head upon his breast with a heavy sigh.

"I hope not, father," said Louis, trying to comfort him: "all things are possible with God; and let us hope that, if still living, they may yet be restored to us in answer to our prayers."

All that day Bianca had remained in her hiding-place, not daring to venture out for a moment, lest she should be seen by some band of soldiers prowling about in the vicinity. Occasionally all was quiet for a long while in her immediate neighborhood; but she could still hear, ever and anon, distant sounds as of pursuers and pursued; then they would draw nearer, sometimes seeming so close at hand that she listened to the hurrying feet of the ruffians, and their oaths and threats, with the momentary fear that her place of concealment had been discovered, and that she and Philip were about to be dragged from it and slaughtered like the rest; but again the sounds would die away in the distance, and she breathed freely once more, with the assurance that they were safe for the present.

It was a difficult matter to keep Philip still. He grew very tired of the dark, damp cave, and wanted to go out and play where the sun was shining,—wanted

his mother, too; but she comforted him with the promise of being soon taken to his father, and amused him with Bible stories; and, when the dreaded sounds drew near, she had only to whisper that the wicked men would come in and kill them if they knew they were there, and he would cling to her and remain perfectly quiet until the danger was past.

The next day, which was the Sabbath—oh, what a Sabbath to the inhabitants of the valleys!—was passed in much the same way, though with fewer alarms.

About the middle of the afternoon, Philip fell asleep, and Bianca, worn out with excitement and the sleepless vigils of the last two nights, and her fears lulled to rest by the undisturbed quiet which had reigned in the vicinity of the cave for several hours, at length followed his example. All was utter darkness when she woke again; and, groping her way to the entrance of the cavern, she saw by the position of the moon that it must be near midnight. Philip still slept soundly, and she felt that now was the time to make the attempt to reach Perosa. Kneeling down, she prayed fervently for God's guidance and protecting care; then, raising the little sleeper in her arms, and wrapping his blanket more closely about him, she crept cautiously out, glancing this way and that, to see that no lurking foe was nigh, and, taking the road to La Vachera, hurried onward with a beating heart.

She passed over the first few miles in much fear and trembling, taking, every now and then, a backward glance, to see if she were pursued: but she met with no hinderance, and, traveling steadily forward at a good pace, in spite of her burden—for she was a stout, healthy country lass, used to climbing mountain-paths

and to carrying loads heavier than little Philip—would have reached her place of refuge by the afternoon of the next day; but, a snow-storm coming on, she lost her way, and wandered hither and thither, till, entirely exhausted with fatigue and cold, she at length sank down on a snow-wreath in utter despair, allowing the child, who was sleeping peacefully in his blanket, quite untouched by cold or weariness, to slide from her arms to a soft resting-place on the snow by her side.

She had carried him all those weary miles, occasionally sitting down by the roadside to rest a little, and to refresh herself and him with the few cakes she had still left in her pocket when they started, and then patiently toiling on again, soothing and comforting the child, when awake and fretful, with the hope of soon seeing his father, and still bearing him onward, with the same unwearied kindness and love, when again wrapped in unconscious slumber. But now her strength had become utterly exhausted, and her senses so benumbed by cold that she knew not that her little charge had slipped from her grasp.

She was fast losing consciousness, when some one shook her by the shoulder, and a kind voice said in her ear, "Get up, get up, my poor girl! It is certain death to lie here. You are beginning to freeze even now."

It was a gentle, woman's voice that had spoken, as Bianca knew afterward when she remembered it all as a dream; and it was answered in manly tones.

"Nay, Catarina, I think she is not able to move. I will bear her to our cottage,—'tis scarce a stone's-throw from here,—if you will bring the child. Poor creatures! they are, no doubt, some of the fugitives from Angogna; and God be thanked that we have a shelter to

offer them. If it be not already too late," he added, in a tone of deep concern, as he raised Bianca's insensible form in his stalwart arms and bore it rapidly on, while his wife followed with Philip.

A very few moments' walk brought them to their home, a snug cottage standing quite alone in a little basin or hollow on the mountain-side; and here Bianca was carried into a neat room, where a cheerful fire was burning, and a kettle singing on the hearth, and laid upon a comfortable bed.

Catarina, joyfully announcing that the child seemed perfectly well, and not to have felt the cold at all, laid him gently on a wolf-skin which she had spread on the floor near the fire, and then went to help her husband chafe the benumbed limbs of the poor half-frozen girl.

They succeeded ere long in restoring her to consciousness; but she seemed weak and ill, and Catarina would not allow her to rise, but bade her lie still and rest, and she should presently have some supper.

"See, Antoine," she said to her husband, as she moved quickly about the room, getting the meal ready; "the little one is beginning to stir."

"Yes," he said; and, going to the child, he released him from the folds of the blanket, and took him on his knee

Philip seemed a little frightened at first on finding himself in a strange place and with none but stranger faces about him, and called for Bianca, while his lip trembled and his eyes filled with tears.

Bianca answered feebly from the bed, and Antoine raised the little fellow in his arms and carried him to look at her.

"There, you see she is quite safe," he said; "and

now you and I will go and sit down by the fire again, and you shall tell me your name."

"Philip Masson," said the boy, "and I live in La Tour; but we had to go away from La Tour and live in Bianca's house, and she brought me away from there because those cruel soldiers wanted to kill us."

"And the good God took care of you?" said Antoine, inquiringly.

"Yes, and didn't let us get hurt; though it was very dark and cold where we went. And now I'm going to my father; Bianca said she would take me to him."

And so he prattled on, talking of his father and mother, brother and sisters; all his fear having fled with one earnest gaze into the kind face of his new nurse.

Catarina's simple repast of goat's milk, and cheese, and bread made of chestnuts, was soon on the table; God's blessing was asked upon it, and Philip, still sitting upon Antoine's knee, made a hearty meal.

Bianca, too, ate something, and, after a good night's rest, was able to sit up and tell their sad story to their kind entertainers. They wept with her as she described the terrible scenes of that dreadful day of slaughter in her lovely valley; but it was not the first time they had heard of them, for they had been to Perosa, to attend church, on the Sabbath, and had seen and talked with some of the fugitives.

"I crossed La Vachera quite safely," Bianca said, in conclusion, "but lost my way in a snow-storm on these mountains, and wandered about until I was completely worn out; and I think little Philip and I would have found our graves in the snow-wreaths ere this, if you, my kind friends, had not come to our aid."

"Catarina and I were searching for a sheep that had wandered from the fold," said Antoine, "and it was God who guided our steps to the spot where you lay: to him, therefore, be all the praise."

"Yes," said Catarina, earnestly, "and we sincerely thank him that he has thus given us another opportunity to obey his command to do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith."

"You must stay with us, Bianca, until this storm of persecution has passed away. Yonder lies the valley of Perosa at our feet," she added, pointing from the window; "and, as we belong to one of its communes, you are as safe here as there."

Antoine warmly seconded his wife's invitation, and Bianca thankfully accepted it, but added that she must go to Perosa as soon as she had recovered sufficient strength, and there search for Philip's father, whom she believed to be still living, and who probably supposed that all his family had been slain.

"Ah!" said Catarina, tenderly caressing the child, who was seated in her lap, "what joy it will bring to his desolate heart to learn that even one has been spared to him! Antoine, let us not keep him in ignorance of this happiness until Bianca recovers."

"No; I will myself go in search of him. I will set out this moment," replied her husband, beginning at once to prepare for his walk.

"Dear little fellow!" said Catarina, drawing the child closer to her breast, and kissing him fondly, as the door closed on Antoine, "we would gladly keep him for our own, my husband and I, if no one else had a stronger claim."

"Have you none?" asked Bianca, half hesitatingly.

"None on earth," replied Catarina, a tear glistening in her eye. "I have been Antoine Revelli's wife for three years, and, when we had been one year wedded, God gave us a lovely babe; but in a few months the Good Shepherd gathered the little lamb to his own bosom; and, though we cannot but mourn our loss, yet we thank him every day that our precious one is safe from all sin and sorrow and suffering."

Some hours later, Catarina, looking from the window, saw her husband returning, accompanied by a tall stranger and a young lad whose head was bound up as if he had been wounded. Another moment, and the door of the cottage was thrown open, and Philip, dropping the plaything with which Catarina had supplied him, sprang forward, with the joyful cry, "My father!" and was instantly folded to the heart of the stranger, who stood there for many minutes silent and still, straining him to his heaving breast as if he would never let him go from his arms again; and the little, childish arms twined themselves lovingly about his neck, and the little face lay hidden on his shoulder. But at last Philip raised his head, and asked, "Where's mother?"

For a moment his father continued silent, and then his voice was very low and tremulous as he replied, "The dear Saviour has taken her home to live with him, my son. We may go to her, but she can never come to us."

"And Lucia, and Maria, and the baby?" he asked.

"With their mother, I trust, my boy," his father answered, in quivering tones; "and we too shall go there one day, Philip, if we love and serve the Lord. But here is Louis, your brother; the good God has yet spared him to us."

"Where?" asked Philip, turning his head.

"Here!" replied Louis, springing to his side "Philip, Philip darling!" And his voice was choked with sobs as he caught the little outstretched hand in his and kissed it again and again with ardent affection.

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" exclaimed Geoffrey, with an upward glance of his tear-dimmed eyes. "Let us thank our heavenly Father that in the midst of wrath he has remembered mercy;" and, sinking upon his knees, in which the others immediately followed his example, he poured out his praises and thanksgivings for this new mercy vouchsafed him in the midst of all his trials.

Nor did he forget afterward to testify his gratitude to Bianca, and to Antoine and his wife. Catarina was loth to part with the child, whom she had already begun to love dearly, and she and Antoine proposed that Geoffrey and Louis should also take up their temporary abode within their house, which the latter readily and gratefully consented to do.

CHAPTER IX.

“War is honorable
In those who do their native rights maintain
In those whose swords an iron barrier are
Between the lawless spoiler and the weak.”

JOANNA BAILLIE: *Ethwald*.

EARLY on the morning of the massacre—at the very hour that Bianca, seated on the floor of her closet, with her ear to the crack of the kitchen-door, shuddered with horror and fear at the ominous words of the soldiers—two men were silently wending their way through the dense forest that lay between the Pelice and the mountains, in the vicinity of Luserna. Gradually they emerged from its depths, and, ascending a hill beyond, paused upon its summit and turned to look behind them.

The valley lay at their feet, seemingly wrapped in profound slumber—no sound reaching the ear, save the rippling of water, the distant baying of a dog, or the crowing of a cock in some farm-yard far away among the hills; and very lovely it looked, dressed in the fresh verdure of spring, and with the soft, silvery light of the moon resting on meadow, field, forest, and river.

“Surely earth holds no fairer spot than our own beautiful valley,” remarked one of the travelers to his companion. “How peaceful it looks now! yet, alas!” he added, with a heavy sigh, “how soon may we see it laid waste by fire and sword!”

"Ah, Hubert, may the Lord in his mercy avert so terrible a calamity!" replied the other.

"Look, Pierre! methinks I can even discern my own little cottage, nestling among the chestnut and mulberry trees on yonder height," said the first speaker, turning his gaze in the direction of San Giovanni. "Alas! shall I ever again welcome you, my brother, to a seat beside its hearth? Shall I ever again dwell there with mother, wife, and babes?"

"God alone knows," said Pierre. "Ah, Hubert, it may be that we have loved our earthly homes too well, and that he is about to teach us that here we have no continuing city, that thus we may be led more earnestly to seek one to come."

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," said Hubert; and, with another longing, lingering look, they turned and went on their way, leaving behind them the lovely valley, destined in another short hour to be deluged in blood.

On Thursday—the day after their flight from Angrogna—Hubert and Pierre had seen their families safely domiciled in Perosa; and on that day, also, news was brought them of the deceitful assurances of the marquis,—in which they, however, put no faith; but, seeing that the blow was delayed, they determined to recross the mountains and seek an interview with their leader, Gianavel.

They were now in sight of his house, which stood at the foot of an extension of the mountain toward Luserna; but, deeming it yet too early to rouse the chief from his slumbers, they passed on in the direction of Rora, intending to rest for a few hours and take

breakfast at the house of Antony Romano, a brother of Hubert's, and then return.

The path led them along the heights; below, in an ever-deepening gulf on the left, thundered the torrent Lusernette, rushing and roaring on over stones and debris fallen from the mountains above, and ever and anon breaking into cataracts; while at every step the path grew more steep and rugged and the scenery wilder, the cliffs, piled up on each side, assuming every odd and fanciful appearance of which rock is capable. At length, reaching a hamlet whose three or four grotesque-looking log cottages, perched amid the rocks and overhung by luxuriant chestnut-trees, added to the picturesqueness of the landscape, they left the path, and, approaching the nearest of the little dwellings, Hubert knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" asked a voice from within.

"It is I, Antony, and my brother-in-law, Pierre Masson," replied Hubert; and instantly the door was unbarred, and they were cordially invited to enter.

"What news bring you, brothers?" was Antony's anxious inquiry when they had exchanged greetings; to which the others replied by relating the occurrences of the last few days, concluding with the information that all was yet quiet in the valleys of Angrogna and Luserna.

Alas! though they knew it not, the assassins were even then rousing to their bloody work.

"All may be quiet now," said Antony, "but much I fear 'tis only the calm that precedes the storm. But you are doubtless both weary and hungry after your long tramp; you must have rest and refreshment. Ah, here is my wife, who will soon prepare breakfast

for us," he added, as a comely, pleasant-faced woman entered the room and greeted the visitors with cordial hospitality.

"Yes," she said; "you shall presently have such food as our house affords, and be kindly welcome to it." And, while they continued their conversation with her husband, she made haste to set out her table and cover it with the simple fare customary in the valleys.

No troops had been quartered in Rora; yet it was by no means the design of the enemy to spare it; and accordingly on this, the mornning of extermination, five or six hundred troops, under the command of Count Christopher of Luserna, and fresh from the slaughter of the inhabitants of the sister valleys, were dispatched against it, there to repeat their terrible work of destruction. They had already crossed the river, passed through the forest, and were ascending the hill of Rumer, when Gianavel saw them.

He instantly comprehended their errand, and hastening up the hill by another route, thus getting in advance of them, he struck into the path followed some hours before by Hubert and Pierre, and in a few moments had reached Antony's door, where he found the three just setting out, musket in hand, to visit him.

"Haste! haste!" he cried: "the enemy is already at the doors. They are coming up the valley some hundreds strong; no doubt designing to attack Rora. Haste! we must defend the pass!" And even while he spoke he hurried forward, closely followed by the others, and collecting several more on the way.

As they pressed on, the road became more and more rugged and steep; on the one side was the precipice, with its raging, roaring torrent below, and on the

other the rocks rose high and almost perpendicular above their heads, and at length in front also, so that apparently no farther progress could be made; for here the path was concealed by a projection of rock, clothed with a dense growth of chestnut-trees, which ran seemingly across it, closing the view from the south, and commanding the approach of the enemy's center and of both flanks.

This was the spot Gianavel had selected for his ambuscade; and he and his men hastened to ascend the rocky rampart.

"Now, my friends," he said, "the enemy is in strong force, and we are few in number; but God is on our side. Lord," he cried, lifting his hands and eyes toward heaven, "it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God: for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee."

Then, turning to his men again, "They will be coming up yonder defile in a moment," he said. "Here, Antony and Hubert, place yourselves on this side; Pierre, you and I will stand upon this rock, where we can take them in front; and the rest of you may take your stations on the other side; and the moment I give the word, all pour in your fire at once."

Thus posted to the best advantage, they stood calmly awaiting the approach of the Popish troops, who, evidently not at all apprehensive of an attack, moved up the defile with but little attention to order, and conversing gayly as they walked.

"These barbets," said one, "have been taught such a lesson within these last few days that we shall not

have a sword to draw nor a shot to fire; so we may take it leisurely, and keep our strength for the chase."

"For myself," said another, "I dislike your bloodless victories. Sharp swords and round volleys for me; your quiet, shepherd-like expedition is death to a soldier of spirit."

"Stop there, Pietro," said a third, who had caught the last words: "the expedition is not over; and, before it is, there is *one* at least who may wish he had still been a shepherd."

"Coward!" retorted Pietro, fiercely drawing his sword; "my silence has spared thee a more ignominious end. Defend thyself; and know, ere thou diest, that I saw the deed—saw thee perpetrate——"

"Well," interrupted the other, calmly, "I suppose you saw me deal a few hearty blows in the late affray, which proved fatal. What then?"

"I did," replied Pietro; "but those blows fell only on women and children."

"And yours, Signor Cavalliero, on the aged and defenseless."

"A gallant pair, truly!" exclaimed the first speaker, with a scornful laugh. "Women and children are safe indeed when such magnanimous heroes bear the duke's commission."

"What!" inquired another; "have we not full absolution for whatever we are forced to do in the way of duty? Are we not bound by religion, as well as loyalty, to extirpate this race of barbets? And what does it signify if at times our zeal do overstep moderation? Their destruction is *decreed*, and he performs his duty best who dispatches most. What say you, Signor Caporello?"

"Nothing," replied the corporal; "soldiers have no business to think—that department belongs to their superiors; but," he added, in a whisper, "to-day's march will hardly mend our rations. A day's march under Pianeza is worth fifty *scudi*. In the late affair, every man has secured pay for a twelvemonth."

"And why may not we to-day?" inquired the other. "Every house in Rora is given up to pillage, and these barbets have generally something to compensate us for the trouble of taking it."

"True, their gold is better than their creed; and if,"—he added, with mock solemnity,—“if it cost a little blood in the gaining, we soon forget that in the spending. But, indeed, I become tender-hearted to the cause—it pays so well. Now, thanks to the Propaganda and the obstinacy of heretics, a soldier may live by his profession. And why not? If swords be made to slay, and heretics to be slain, Giuseppe's the man."

"It were ill policy, however, to extirpate the breed," remarked his companion: "we must not root up the tree while we require its shelter; and as this sort of warfare is *gainful*, as well as glorious, why, we must act like the provident chamois-hunter—allow two or three of the flock to escape, so as to secure sport for the next season."

"But," interposed a former speaker, "our orders are explicit—'Take, burn, slay, and destroy!' and as for this Rora, his Excellency has sworn not to be outdone in loyalty even by Pianeza himself, and will this very day, by its destruction, give a splendid example of attachment to his sovereign. Well, well! provided we soldiers enjoy the plunder, Christovel may have the praise: that fills no pockets."

Thus heartlessly discoursing on the fiendish work before them, they drew near the spot where Gianavel and his little band of patriots stood concealed.

"What an admirable post of defense!" said he who had held the altercation with Pietro, looking up to the wooded rocks that hung half suspended over the road. "So well guarded by nature, these barbets might render their fastnesses impregnable at very small expense. A score of musketeers—men like ourselves—planted on these rocks, might keep an army at bay. But, abandoned to destruction, all thoughts of defense have been given up, and they only wait to bid us welcome."

"We do!"* exclaimed a voice of thunder; and at the same instant they were saluted by a volley of musketry from front, right, and left, and so certain was the aim that every shot told, and seven soldiers fell dead.

No enemy was in sight, but the curling smoke, rolling down the rocks, while helping to conceal the number of their assailants, showed them whence the blow had come, and that they were fairly caught between two fires. The attack, so sudden and unexpected, threw the survivors into confusion. They retrograded, and those in the rear, who had just attained the summit of the hill, seeing this movement, and imagining that a numerous ambushade was at hand, turned round, thus separating the vanguard from the main body; and, the Waldenses continuing to fire discharge after discharge, the former were presently seized with a panic, and, with half their number slain, hastened up

* For this conversation I am indebted to Beattie's work on the Waldenses.

the hill they had just descended, and the whole battalion fled together toward Villar.

Gianavel and his men pursued, and, coming up with them in the forest, but keeping concealed behind the trees and shrubs, they again poured in a murderous fire upon the fugitives.

Having thus succeeded in driving away those whose errand, according to their own avowal, had been to burn, pillage, and destroy, Gianavel and his companions retraced their steps to Rora and informed its inhabitants of the peril they had so narrowly escaped.

Neither the Rorans nor their heroic defenders had yet heard of the massacres which had that morning taken place in the other valleys; and they immediately dispatched a messenger to La Tour, to which place the marquis had now returned, to complain to him of the attempted invasion of their homes. But he professed to know nothing at all about the matter.

"If any attempted to attack you," he said, "it was not by my orders: the troops under my command would not commit such an outrage. It must have been some party of brigands, or Piedmontese vagabonds; and I only wish you had cut them all in pieces. However, I will take care that no such thing shall occur again."

"No faith with heretics," says Popery; and at that very moment Pianeza was secretly chafing under the defeat of his troops, and preparing to send another detachment to accomplish that in which the first had so signally failed.

This was what Gianavel suspected; and, though the majority of the Rorans seem to have put faith in the

asseverations of the marquis, he went on making every preparation in his power to repel the attack which he fully expected would be made the next day ; in which expectation he was confirmed that evening by the arrival of several fugitives from the valley of Luserna, bringing the sad tale of the horrors already perpetrated there, from which they had with difficulty escaped. Gianavel was able, however, to muster only seventeen men, including himself ; and of these only eleven were fully armed, while the others had slings, in the use of which they were very expert. He divided them into three parties, two slingers in each ; and, choosing a defile in which not more than ten men could manœuvre at once, they concealed themselves behind the rocks and trees, and again awaited the approach of the enemy.

It was Sabbath morning, the day on which the Vaudois were wont to assemble in their churches to worship God ; but not thus might Gianavel and his little band of patriots spend the hours of this holy day : they must defend their altars and their fires, their wives and little children, from a remorseless foe, more bloodthirsty and cruel than the wild beasts of the forests ; and while Bianca, in her cave, looked down upon the smoking ruins of Angrogna's hamlets, and trembled with fear at the sound of every approaching footstep,—while here and there, through all the length and breadth of those lovely valleys, the blood of God's martyrs was crying to him from the ground, some lying cold in death, and others yet groaning in untold agony,—and while others still sighed in dungeons, in prospect of the torture and the stake,—these devoted

men, crying to the God of their fathers for help, waited and watched in their ambushade, determined to defend Rora to the last from sharing such a fate.

At length the head of the column appeared, moving up the defile; more cautiously, and in better order, than on the previous day, for they were not so certain that no effort would be made to stop their progress. But this caution availed them not; for, though no enemy was in sight, a sudden volley of musketry laid ten men and an officer dead upon the ground, and, this being instantly followed up by a vigorous discharge of stones from the slings, a cry arose, "All is lost! save yourselves!" And the entire troop turned and fled, Gianavel and his men pursuing, leaping from rock to rock like panthers, still keeping themselves concealed, and so multiplying their numbers by their activity and courage and the deadly certainty of their aim, that they seemed a large force to the panic-stricken foes, who were driven back to their quarters with the loss of fifty-two of their number, and filled with astonishment at the invisible army which had so unaccountably interrupted their march.

Pianeza was much mortified and very angry at this second defeat of his troops; but, dissembling still, and hoping even yet to gain his end by treachery, he sent Count Christopher to Rora, to assure the inhabitants of his friendly intentions toward them, and that the advance of the troops against their valley had been the result of a misunderstanding. Certain representations had been made against them, he said, of the falsity of which he was now fully convinced; and they had nothing further to fear. And, strange as it may seem, many of the Rorans were disposed to credit

his assertions; but, truthful themselves, they were slow to suspect others of falsehood.

"What think you now, Captain Gianavel?" asked Hubert, addressing his leader, as together they wended their way toward Antony's cottage, after listening to Pianeza's artful message. "What think you now?—that we may disband and return to our homes?"

"No," replied the chief energetically; "I think rather that now we have need of double vigilance. I know that the Propaganda keeps no faith with heretics; and I believe that to-morrow will see a larger force than has yet been sent, marching against Rora. It grieves me that our brethren are so blind; yet it is only because, being so truthful themselves, they know not how to realize the utter faithlessness of these Propagandists."

"I entirely agree with you," said Hubert. "You and the Barba Leger strongly opposed the determination of the communes to quarter the troops of the marquis; and, alas! what terrible calamities have followed their rejection of your counsel! You were in the right then, and I believe you are so now."

Alas! Gianavel's suspicions were indeed but too well founded. The perfidious Pianeza was at that very time engaged in assembling a battalion, even more numerous than either of the former; and this he next day dispatched against Rora.

Gianavel, with his little band, was again on the watch; and perceiving, from the height where he stood, the rapid advance of the soldiers, and that they were now in too great force for him to attack them with any hope of success, he immediately sent a messenger to warn the Rorans of their danger.

They fled instantly to Monte Friolante, thus escaping with their lives, but compelled to abandon their property.

The Popish troops plundered and burned their houses, and then set out on their return, driving all the herds of the poor people before them.

Gianavel was still on the watch. "See," said he to his men; "they are now so encumbered with booty that we may venture to assail them; but let us first ask help from on high." And, all falling on their knees, he poured out a short but earnest petition to the God of battles.

Then, rising, "Now to Damassero," he said.

This was a place where they could secure an advantageous position for their mode of attack; and, hastening to occupy it ere the enemy came up, they waited, as before, until the front ranks appeared, and then saluted them with a fatal discharge of musketry.

Ignorant of the number of their assailants, and unwilling to part with their booty, the soldiers, upon seeing the fall of their comrades, turned about and drew off toward Villar.

The Waldenses had the advantage of their foe in being better acquainted with the locality; and, instantly striking into a by-path which led them past the enemy, they presently reached a place called Pian-Pra, a commanding post near the summit of the mountain that separates Rora from Villar. Ere long the hostile army appeared, moving slowly along with its booty, and in complete disorder; for, their assailants having disappeared, the soldiers imagined they had no further need of caution.

Suddenly a discharge point-blank prostrated fifteen

or sixteen of their number. The others, instead of seeking to defend themselves, hurried on with their booty. But they were now on the slope of the mountain, and Gianavel and his men, taking advantage of this, rolled down an avalanche of great stones upon them; then, as they were hurrying aside to avoid these, the Waldenses dashed down upon them with fierce shouts, and thus so completed their confusion and alarm that they left their booty and fled—each man for himself.

The great bulk of the regiment reached Villar; but many were slain by the Waldenses, and many others, being driven upon precipices which flanked an impetuous torrent, perished in attempting to descend. Some, in their haste and fear, dropping at once from the precipices, were dashed to pieces on the rocks below; others let themselves down by ropes fastened to the trees that overhung the abyss—some few with success; but the greater part of those who reached the bottom in safety were either swept away by the roaring torrent that filled the chasm, or, unable to ford or swim across the stream, were left to a more lingering fate.

Having thus routed and driven away the enemy, Gianavel and his band again ascended to the Pian-Pra. where the leader, calling upon his men to halt, said, "Let us return thanks."

The whole party knelt; and he exclaimed, "O Lord God, we bless thee for having preserved us! Protect our people in these calamities, and increase in us thy faith!"

Then followed the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed

Later in the day, the Waldenses had another ren-

counter with a detachment of the enemy sent out from Villar, and were again victorious.

In the mean time, the aged men, the women and children, in their mountain-retreat, had been besieging a throne of grace on behalf of their brave defenders, praying with strong cries and tears for their safety and success; and their hearts overflowed with joy and thankfulness when, toward evening, they saw them returning unhurt and flushed with victory. Then together they sought their homes—many, alas! to find them a mere heap of smoking ruins—for the town was half burned down; but those whose houses had been spared opened their doors to their less fortunate brethren, and willingly shared with them the little they had left.

Antony Romano's cottage was still standing; but, on entering, they found that it had been thoroughly ransacked by the soldiers, every article of value, which was not too bulky, carried off, and much of what was left ruthlessly destroyed; and thus, in a day, they had been stripped of almost all their worldly possessions; for in their hasty flight they had abandoned everything but their children.

Magdalen, standing in the midst of this wreck and ruin, gazed about her with a very sad countenance and a deep-drawn sigh. Then, turning a loving look upon her husband and children, "It might have been much worse, Antony," she said, smiling through her gathering tears. "Thank God that we are all alive and unhurt!"

"Yes, dear wife," he answered, earnestly, "let us thank him for that, and also that he has counted us worthy to suffer loss for his sake, and that by his

grace he has enabled us to lay up our chief treasure in heaven, 'where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' "

Not a word of anger or hatred toward their cruel foes was breathed by this pious couple; neither did they waste time in useless lamentations over their losses, but set to work at once to repair, as far as possible, the damage done, and to provide such food as they could procure for themselves, their children, and some houseless neighbors who came to them for shelter.

Hubert and Pierre had not returned with the rest of Rora's defenders, but were, as Antony informed his wife, still out on the heights, watching against a surprise by some new detachment of the enemy. For some hours longer they remained at their post, but were at length relieved, and returned to Antony's cottage, where they obtained some repose; but morning found them with the rest of Gianavel's band—now increased to the number of thirty or forty men—again intrenched behind the rocks of Rumer, where they had so signally defeated the foe four days previously.

The Marquis di Pianeza, frantic with rage and shame at hearing of this new defeat of his troops, now ordered that a simultaneous attack should be made upon the Waldenses by all the royal troops from Bagnolo, Cavour, Barges, Bubiana, and Villar. All these were directed to assemble at Luserna on a given day and hour; but one of the leaders, Mario di Bagnolo, a cruel and bloodthirsty persecutor, resolved to appropriate to himself the entire glory of defeating this "miserable handful of adventurers" (as their enemies were pleased to style those heroic defenders of their faith and families), marched to the attack two hours in

advance of the rest of the troops. He had with him three companies of regulars—one of Piedmontese volunteers, and a brigade of Irish, whom Cromwell had banished for their cruelties to their Protestant countrymen, and who had been welcomed as brothers by the slaughterers of the Waldenses, and whose zeal had been quickened by the promise of the gift of the lands and houses of those whom they were about to destroy.

Bagnolo arranged his men in two divisions; one of which took the right side of the valley, the other the left.

Gianavel and his band first saw the left wing; but, as they were about to attack it, they perceived the right advancing along the heights above them, and thus menacing their rear.

“To the summit!” cried Gianavel; and, turning about and leaving the troops below to continue their slow and toilsome ascent, the Waldenses fired a deadly volley into the ranks of those above them, who were just turning the point of the rock and had not yet had time to form; then, instantly throwing themselves flat on their faces, they avoided the discharge which the enemy returned. Then, under cover of the smoke of that discharge, they turned quickly to the right, and, sword in hand, cut their way through the enemy’s left wing, weakened in number by the concentration which the fire of the Waldenses had just attracted in the opposite direction. In a few moments they were on the summit which Gianavel had pointed out; and there, intrenching themselves among the rocks, and strong in the triple energy of a just cause, confidence in God, and recent success, they fearlessly faced the

foe. In vain the two detachments, now combined, advanced to assail them; they could not get beyond a certain point, their front ranks being continually shot down by the unerring fire of the practiced marksmen above themselves and protected from harm by their position. As snow melts away from the hill-side under the rays of the sun, so these troops melted away under the fire of the Waldenses, untill at length, seized with a panic, they turned and fled, leaving sixty-five of their number dead on the spot, besides the wounded and dead whom they carried off with them.

"Haste! let us pursue them along the valley!" cried several of the Waldenses, springing forward.

"Nay," said Gianavel, calling them back; "rather let us hasten along the heights and intercept them at Pierro Capillo."

The others at once yielded to his better judgment, and a few moments saw them intrenched in the narrow pass he had mentioned.

Presently Bagnolo's troops came moving slowly along, without order, thinking they had left their foes behind them; but suddenly they were assailed by a heavy fire of musketry, great rocks rolled down upon them, and a party of men, whose numbers they could not ascertain amid the rocks and brushwood, precipitated themselves upon them, sword and pistol in hand. Resistance was not even attempted; the fear of the God of Jacob had fallen upon these Popish troops, and so panic-struck were they, so bewildered with terror, that, instead of fleeing along the road before them, they turned aside and threw themselves over the rocks and precipices, or tried to let themselves down by ropes and roots, so that very few of their number escaped,

almost all being either dashed to pieces against the rocks, drowned in the torrent below, or slain by the steel and lead of the Waldenses. Their leader, Bagnolo, was extricated from a pool into which he had fallen, and carried, half naked, wounded and bruised, to Luserna, where he died a few days afterward.

The Marquis di Pianeza, exasperated almost to frenzy, called his officers together and held a council of war, in which it was decided to concentrate the whole army, and then, by dividing it into separate corps, to block up every pass at once, and, by a simultaneous movement upon Rora from every accessible point, to secure its destruction. In accordance with this plan, three thousand soldiers advanced from Villar, three thousand from Bagnolo, and six thousand from Luserna, the marquis actually marching twelve thousand men against the little commune of Rora, a village of fifty houses, already half burned down.

The detachment from Villar arrived first, and Gianavel attacked it from the heights; but meanwhile the other troops occupied the lower portion of the valley, pillaged and set fire to the houses, committed the most monstrous outrages, and killed or carried off all the inhabitants. All the able-bodied men were engaged with Gianavel in defending the frontier, and the Popish troops found only old men, and women and children, in the village; but upon these they fell with the fury of wolves, and supplication was answered only by the saber.

Their bloody work finished, the soldiers gave themselves up to riot and plunder; and when the morning sun rose upon Rora its bright rays fell upon naught but a heap of smoking ruins, through which protruded

here and there the ghastly features of the slain. Not a voice was heard, not a house was left standing.

The sun looked down, too, upon a forest in the valley of Luserna, where the husbands, sons, and fathers of those murdered ones, the heroic band who had so long and bravely defended Rora, were now silently mourning over her desolation. They had done all that men could do; but overwhelming numbers had conquered at last, and their homes were destroyed, their aged parents, their sisters, wives, and little children, slain or carried away captives; and what had they left? Their just and holy cause, and their firm faith and confidence in God. Ah, it was that alone which sustained them in this fearful hour! They knew that God would not forsake his inheritance, nor cast away his people whom he had chosen: they knew that he was able to save to the uttermost both themselves and their dear ones, and that in his own good time he would appear for their deliverance; they remembered the Saviour's words, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," and they were willing to wait for that hereafter, even though it should come not until they were themselves safely landed upon the other side of the river of death. But, oh, their hearts were rent with anguish, and bitter thoughts of vengeance had doubtless to be wrestled with, and put aside by the help of Him who has said, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

Sentinels were posted on the outskirts of the wood, to guard against surprise, while the main body, occupying the deeper recesses, stood leaning upon their muskets or against the trees, or sat upon the ground, in every attitude of sorrow and dejection. One, a noble-

looking man, a little apart from the others, paced slowly to and fro, with his head bowed upon his breast in deep and troubled thought. It was Gianavel, mourning over the ruin of Rora and the desolation of his own little home, but, worse than all, over the terrible fate of his beloved wife and children, now captives in the hands of the ferocious Pianeza.

The flutter of a small white flag in the distance attracted the attention of Antony Romano, who stood sentinel on that side of the encampment nearest La Tour.

"Ha! a flag of truce," he said, half aloud; "a messenger from the marquis, no doubt." And he watched it drawing nearer and nearer.

It was borne by a mounted officer, who came alone and unarmed. Reining in his steed within a few feet of the Vaudois sentinel, "I would see your leader," he said. "I bear a message to him from the Marquis di Pianeza."

"He is yonder," replied Antony, pointing to the chief, who, at some little distance, still continued his thoughtful walk. But at that instant Gianavel raised his head, and, seeing the messenger, came forward to meet him.

"Captain Gianavel?" said the officer, half inquiringly, and lifting his cap with involuntary respect, as the brave leader of the Waldenses drew near.

"I am Joshua Gianavel," replied the chief, returning the salute. "What would you with me?"

"I come as the bearer of a letter from his Excellency the Marquis di Pianeza," replied the officer, producing and handing it to him as he spoke.

It ran thus: "To Captain Gianavel. Your wife and

daughters are in my hands, having been made prisoners at Rora. I exhort you, for the last time, to abjure your heresy, as the only means of securing from his royal highness pardon for your rebellion, and of saving your wife and daughters, who will be burned alive if you do not surrender. As to yourself, if you persist in your obstinacy, I shall not trouble myself to send any more troops after you, but shall simply put such a price upon your head as, had you the devil himself in you, would insure your being taken, dead or alive; and if you fall alive into my hands, be sure there are no torments so cruel but that you shall undergo them. This letter is for your guidance; I advise you to profit by it."

The officer narrowly watched the face of the Vaudois leader as he read, as one who would note the effect of the cruel message he had brought. There was a visible deepening of the expression of sadness on the fine, open countenance of the chieftain; but that was all: no look of terror, of doubt or hesitation, accompanied it, and his step was firm and steady, as, with the letter still open in his hand, he retired to a short distance to prepare his answer; and this was what he wrote:

"There is no torment so cruel that I should not prefer it to the abjuration of my faith; and your menaces, instead of deterring me from, fortify me still more firmly in, that faith. As to my wife and children, they well know how dear they are to me; but God alone is Master of their lives, and, if you cause their bodies to perish, he will save their souls. May he receive them into his grace!—them, and me, if it befall me to come into your hands."

"I am aware of the contents of the missive I

brought," said Pianeza's messenger, as Gianavel handed him his reply; "and I trust that you have been wise enough to consent to his Excellency's conditions. I would fain see a brave man restored to the favor of his sovereign and our Holy Mother Church."

"As to the first condition," replied Gianavel, "my wife and children are in his hands, and, if such be God's will, he may accomplish his threat; but this barbarous act can only affect their bodies, for which their religion teaches them not to be over-solicitous. If brought to the stake, they will be supported in the hour of trial. Their faith is proof against terror, and enables the innocent to look with complacent eye upon what is terrible only to the guilty."

"But *such* a death!" said the officer. "Think how horrible! How can you resign those so near **and** dear to you to such a fate?"

"It is, indeed, most horrible," groaned the chieftain; "but, alas! I well know that to surrender myself would not save them. Nor can any harm a hair of their heads without the will of God; and what was once said to Pilate I now say to Pianeza, 'Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.'"

"As to the question of *apostasy*; shall I abjure those principles I have so long defended with my blood?—principles unchangeable as the word of God? Shall I desert *his* cause for the hopes of a renegade? No! In that cause which I have thus feebly espoused, I am ready to perish."

"To die, perhaps," returned the other, significantly; "but reflect: there are things far worse than death."

"I know it," replied Gianavel, calmly; "but the

terrors of the Inquisition are mild, compared with the upbraidings of conscience; and I shall never incur the one by shrinking from the other."

"I see it is useless to reason with an obstinate heretic, and I will waste no more words," said the officer, angrily; and, turning his horse's head, he rode rapidly away, while Gianavel, with a heavy sigh, again bowed his head upon his breast, and resumed his thoughtful walk.

Ere long, however, he discontinued it, and, calling his men together, addressed to them a few words of consolation regarding their common affliction, and of earnest exhortation to trust in God; then, giving them the substance of Pianeza's message to him, and of his own reply, he continued: "I have one child left,—a little son, now intrusted to the care of a relation in Villar. Him I must now convey across the mountains into Dauphiny for safety; and there I hope to recruit our numbers from among our brethren the Vaudois of that province, when we may hope to resume our warfare with more prospect of success; and in the mean time you, my friends, will obtain a little rest, and will be the better prepared to endure the fatigues of another campaign. God willing, I set out on this errand to-night, as soon as darkness renders the attempt less hazardous than now."

CHAPTER X.

‘Then, like grim wolves, came down to steal
From plundering foes their evening meal;
Or, spreading o’er the frighten’d plain,
Rifled their hoards of gather’d grain;
Or in deep night, when all was hush’d,
As loosen’d crags they downward rush’d,
And, like the eagle from the fold,
Bore back their booty to the hold.
Their panic-stricken murderers heard,
In every breeze, some signal word;
Near every rock or tree they saw,
Or seem’d to see, the arm’d Vaudois,
Till bigot murderers quail’d before
The very name of Pra del Tor.”

“MADALENA,” said Aline, dropping the work she held in her hand, “I cannot sew to-day: I am too restless—too anxious. I can think of nothing but the calamities that have come upon our people; of our husbands, and the perils to which they are exposed. I cannot sit still; and the afternoon is bright and clear, and I am longing, too, for a sight of little Philip. Will you go with me to Antoine Revelli’s cottage?”

Madalena hesitated, and glanced at her babe, sitting on the floor at her feet, and at little Paul, who was playing about the room.

“Go, my daughters; it will do you both good,” said Barbara, kindly, “and I will take care of the little ones until you return.”

Madalena thanked her, and, laying away the garment

she had been at work upon, at once complied with her sister's request.

The farm-house in which they had found a temporary home stood on the same mountain with Antoine's little dwelling, though much nearer the base, and the walk from the one to the other, though fatiguing by reason of the steepness of the way, was not too long to be taken quite frequently, and Aline had already paid several visits to the cottage since little Philip had become one of its inmates; for the heart of the childless young mother yearned over the little motherless boy, and he clung to her with ardent affection, ever hailing her coming with delight, and loth to see her go again; while she, looking forward to the time when, these troubles over, they could return to their own home, hoped that then Geoffrey would take up his abode with them and give the child into her care.

Silently the sisters began their walk. Aline was the first to speak.

"It is not quite two weeks since we came to Perosa; and yet how very long the time seems!" she said, with a heavy sigh.

"Yes, so much has come to pass in these days, so much has been done and suffered," replied her sister, echoing the sigh. "How many have gained the martyr's crown since we came here! and no doubt the time which has passed since they were taken home has seemed very short to them. Dear Susan no longer lies upon a bed of pain and weariness, nor does Sara mourn over the loss of her loved ones, nor Martin stoop and bend beneath the weight of cares and years; and Martha—dear Martha, and her children! how happy they are!" she continued, while the tears rolled fast down

her cheeks. "Ah, sister, there are times when I could almost find it in my heart to envy them!"

"Thank God that he has spared you to me, my sister!" replied Aline, in a choking voice. "How could I bear to lose you? Martha was dear to me, but you are dearer still. Oh, Madalena, Madalena, when will these horrors end? How long, O Lord, how long? Wilt thou be angry forever?" she cried, clasping her hands, and raising her streaming eyes to heaven. "'O Lord, in wrath remember mercy!'"

"He will," said Madalena. "Does he not say, 'In my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee'? He will be merciful unto his land and to his people. He will arise and plead his own cause: he is chastening us sorely for our sins, but he will not utterly forsake us."

They walked on, now in silence, now conversing, until Antoine's cottage came in sight. Philip was at play before the door; and, hailing their coming with a joyous shout, he ran gayly to meet them. Catarina made them very welcome, as she always did, and, when they rose to go, urged them to come again. She had already invited them to stay and take their evening meal with her; but Madalena could not leave her little ones so long.

They were more than half-way down the mountain when Aline said, "We have walked very fast, Madalena, and I am weary and out of breath: let us sit down on this rock and rest for a moment."

"As long as you wish, my sister," replied Madalena, as they seated themselves; "the sun is still nearly an hour high, and we need not be in very great haste."

They had been sitting for some moments, gazing in

silence upon the beautiful valley that lay at their feet, and each occupied with her own thoughts, when a step startled them, and Aline, turning her head, sprang up with a joyful cry and threw herself into the arms of her husband.

"Pierre!" cried Madalena, starting to her feet; but her pale lips refused to frame the question she would have asked, and the wild throbbing of her heart almost took away her breath.

"Hubert is safe," Pierre hastened to say. "See, he is but a few paces behind me." And, even as he spoke, Hubert was at her side, and the next instant his Madalena was clasped in his arms.

For a few moments it was enough that they were together: then questions and answers were rapidly exchanged; for, though little more than a week had elapsed since they parted, there was much to tell and to hear. A rumor of an attack upon Rora had reached Perosa, but that was all; and the tears of the sisters fell fast and they shuddered with horror as they listened to the story of its destruction and of the cruelties inflicted upon many a dear friend,—especially upon Antony Romano's wife and children, whose relationship to Hubert made them seem very near and dear. But when Gianavel's exploits became the theme, and they heard how he had been enabled, with a mere handful of undisciplined men, again and again to defeat the hosts of the destroyers, the cheeks of the listeners burned, and their eyes sparkled, and they exclaimed, with one breath, "Surely God is with him, even as he was with Joshua of old when he led the armies of Israel!"

Then Hubert told of their withdrawal to the valley

of Luserna, of the letter sent by Pianeza, and of Gianavel's noble reply.

"Oh, how terrible! Has Pianeza a heart of stone?" cried Madalena, weeping bitterly. "But tell me, Hubert, where is Gianavel now? Is his band broken up and scattered, that you are able to be here?"

"Oh, no; it has not come to that," replied Hubert; and then he went on to explain the errand on which the chief had gone, and his intention to resume hostilities on his return with the hoped-for recruits.

"Where is the Barba Leger?" asked Aline. "Did he escape the massaere?"

"Yes," said Hubert: "he has gone to Paris, where he will publish a manifesto—or perhaps has done it ere this—to all the Protestant powers of Europe, entreating them to interfere on our behalf."

"God grant him success!" exclaimed Aline, earnestly.

"Aline," asked Pierre, in a low, moved tone, "have you seen my poor brother since——"

He paused, unable to proceed; and Aline answered, with a shudder, "Since that dreadful day? Yes, several times. You know what a tenderly affectionate husband and father he was; his loss is terrible, but he is wonderfully supported under it, and his heart overflows with gratitude that his sons have been spared to him."

"His sons?" cried Pierre, joyfully. "Is it indeed so? I feared that all had perished. How was it that they escaped?"

Aline told him the story as she had heard it from Bianca and Louis, and Pierre and Hubert listened with almost breathless interest. Then they spoke of other

incidents which had occurred during the attack upon Rora, telling how Margaret Garniero—Gianavel's sister—while exhorting her husband to defend Rora to the last, had received a shot in her breast, and exclaimed, "Do not be shaken by this, Giuseppe, but endure the cross with patience, and hold out to the end;" and of many who had endured the most terrible tortures, and seen them inflicted upon their best-beloved ones, rather than abjure their faith.

"Oh, Pierre, my husband," groaned Aline, clasping her arms about his neck and hiding her face on his breast, "how could they endure it? How could I stand by and see you suffer, when a word of mine would bring you ease? Oh, I fear—I fear I should speak it! I am so weak, so timid—I do so dread pain for myself and for those I love—that, I fear, if such a trial ever comes to me, I shall even be left to deny my Lord."

"Nay, my beloved wife," said Pierre, pressing her closer to him; "doubt not God's sustaining grace. He says, 'Fear not; I will help thee.' 'Be strong, and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' My beloved, if you belong to Christ, you have nothing to fear from devils or from men; for what does he say concerning his sheep? 'I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.'"

"Precious promises," said Madalena. "Oh, how weak I feel at times! how utterly unable to endure the trials that seem just at hand! But when I am weak, then am I strong. I cannot sink, for the eternal

God is my refuge, and underneath me are the ever lasting arms."

"I know that whatever God doeth, it shall be forever," repeated Hubert. "If he has once received me into his love, he will never cast me out from it; 'for the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.'"

They rose, and, descending the mountain, soon reached the farm-house gate. The sun had set some time before, and Mary Fache, the mistress of the dwelling, stood on the threshold, looking out for the return of her guests.

"Ah, my good friends," she said, addressing the sisters, "I was growing anxious about you: but I see you come not alone, as you went. Welcome all of you. Come in, Hubert and Pierre. You bring us tidings?"

"We do," replied Pierre, in an undertone, as they entered; and Barbara started up to meet them.

"My son!" she exclaimed; but her cheek grew pale, and there was a tone of anguish in her voice, as she added, "Hubert, my son, you bring me ill news. I see it in your face."

"Mother, my dearest mother," he said, taking her hand in his, "I left my brother safe and well."

"But Magdalen and the children?" she asked, fixing her eyes upon his face.

He did not answer for a moment, and she dropped her head on her breast with a deep groan.

"Mother," he said, at length, "it is, alas! too true. Rora is destroyed, and her inhabitants massacred, or carried away captives. Mother, those who were so dear to us are forever done with pain and sorrow; for God gave them grace to 'witness a good profession before many witnesses,' and they are now rejoicing before his throne."

"They were his; he hath but taken of his own; he hath done all things well," she said, while her voice quivered with emotion and tears streamed down her aged cheeks.

"Dear Barbara, be comforted," said Mary, drawing near, taking her friend's hand and pressing it in both her own. "Their sufferings are all over; they are done with sin and sorrow, and the blessed Master has wiped away all tears from their eyes. And you will not be long parted from them; for, when your work on earth shall be done, to you also shall be given an abundant entrance into that blissful abode."

"Yes," she replied, wiping away her tears, "I am an old woman, and my race must be nearly run. They cannot come to me, but I shall soon go to them."

She sank back into her seat with a deep sigh, and for some moments naught was heard in the room but a low sound of weeping. Then little Paul came running from an inner apartment, and sprang into his father's arms with a cry of joy; and, Mary's sons, Thomas and Jean, coming in from their work, she rose, and set the supper on the table, inviting all to sit down and eat. But Barbara, in her grief, turned with

loathing from the very sight of food, nor did any of the others show much appetite.

They had just risen from the table, when Thomas, opening the door in answer to a knock, admitted Geoffrey Masson. The brothers embraced with the greatest affection, but for some moments neither was able to speak. Ere they separated, however, each had heard all the other had to tell, and Pierre and Hubert had learned from Geoffrey that the Waldenses of Angrogna and Pramol were preparing to return to those valleys under the leadership of Captain Bartholomew Giaheri, a native of the latter place, and a man fully equal in bravery and patriotism to Gianavel himself. This information Geoffrey gave in answer to an urgent request from his brother and Hubert that he would return with them and become a member of Gianavel's band, adding that he had already enrolled his name in that of Giaheri.

"How soon will Giaheri make the attempt?" asked Hubert.

"Not for two or three weeks," replied Geoffrey. "I suppose you will hardly remain here that long?"

"No," they said; "we hope to rejoin Gianavel in a few days, when he expects to resume hostilities against the enemy. He will, if possible, recruit our numbers from among the Vaudois of Dauphiny."

"In which he will, no doubt, be successful," said Geoffrey. "We also will be supported by our brethren of Pragela in our attempt to recover our valleys; and when the two captains have united their forces, we may hope, by the blessing of God on our just cause, to drive the invaders from our soil, and compel the duke to allow us liberty of conscience."

Hubert and Pierre did not linger long in Perosa, but soon rejoined their leader, who, successful in his efforts to raise recruits, had returned from Dauphiny stronger and more formidable than ever, and taken up his position on a lofty mountain called La Pelaya di Geymeto.

And now, ceasing to act only on the defensive, he attacked the Popish village of Lusernella, situated about half a league from Luserna. He was repulsed by the superior force of the enemy, and himself received a bullet in his leg, which was never extracted; but he succeeded in making a masterly retreat, and the wound did not prevent him from carrying on his expeditions.

"Inexpressible terror," says Muston, "now began to agitate the Piedmontese towns that lay nearest to the mountains, and each insisted on having its intrenchments and its garrison. Some Irish troops, for example, were garrisoned at Bubiana; but they committed such excesses there, that the inhabitants were necessitated to expel them, and thus the persecutors began to destroy one another."

In the latter part of May, Giaheri, having successfully carried out his project of restoring the people of Angrogna and Pramol to their valleys, wrote to Gianavel to join him; and on the 27th of that month the two captains met, and united their forces on the banks of the Angrogna. "In union there is strength," and the Waldenses were now much more formidable than before. They attempted that very evening to surprise the town of Garsigliano.

Within that same cavern in which Bianca and little Philip had lain concealed during that terrible Saturday

and Sunday, two lads sat conversing beside a fire which they had kindled on the rocky floor, the smoke making its way to the outer air through a crevice overhead. The warmth of the fire was by no means unpleasant on that May-day evening; for in that high locality the nights were still cool, and the cavern was damp.

The elder of the lads was our old acquaintance Louis Masson, who had accompanied his father from Perosa, while little Philip was still left behind in the care of Bianca and Catarina; the other was Maurice Jaquin, a gentle, fair-haired boy, apparently about ten years of age, with a look of deep sorrow in his young face: and what wonder? for scarce a month had passed since he had seen the swords of the Popish troops reeking with the blood of his father, mother, brothers, and sisters; of all the happy family of which he had once been a member, he alone survived to mourn his irreparable loss. Maurice was a Roran, the son of a sister of Antony Romano's wife, and his acquaintance with Louis was only of a few hours' standing.

"And you have no relative in Captain Gianavel's band, Maurice?" remarked Louis, inquiringly.

Maurice shook his head sadly. "None but Uncle Antony," he said; "but he has been very, *very* kind to me always, and especially ever since——"

He could say no more, and the sentence was finished with a burst of agonized weeping.

Louis's eyes overflowed also, and, passing his arm round the weeping boy, he drew him closer to his side, making him lay his head upon his shoulder, while he smoothed back the hair from his temples as tenderly as a mother might have done. "Be comforted, dear

Maurice," he said, in low, soothing tones; "remember who has said, 'I will be a Father to the fatherless;' 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love;' 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'"

"Yes, they are precious words," said Maurice; "they have grown very sweet to me of late." Then, sinking on his knees, and clasping his hands, he cried, with almost passionate earnestness, "Help me, O Lord! O my Father in heaven, help me to say, Thy will be done! I cannot do it of myself! oh, I cannot!"

"God shall help thee, and that right early," said Lou's. "He is our strength and our Redeemer; he shall save his people from their sins."

"*They* are done with sin and sorrow," said Maurice, while for an instant a look of joy passed over his pale features, "and never more can any cause them pain or suffering. I fear my grief is very selfish."

"Hark!" whispered Louis; "I surely heard footsteps." And instinctively they rose, and drew back from the fire into the innermost recesses of the cavern, whose thick darkness its feeble rays could not penetrate.

Scarcely had they thus concealed themselves when several men entered the cave one after another, and, unable to distinguish forms or features in the dim, uncertain light, Louis drew his little companion closer to his side, throwing his arm around him as if for protection; but the next instant, recognizing his father's voice, he sprang forward with a cry of joy. "My father, the Lord has brought you back in safety! But was your expedition successful?"

"Not altogether, my son," replied Geoffrey; "the surprise was not so complete as we meant it to be, and at the sound of the tocsin so many troops hastened to

their relief from the surrounding villages, that we were obliged to retire, bringing away nothing but some cattle and six yoke of oxen."

"That is something, though," said Louis, cheerfully; "for now we can have some meat."

"Yes, and we must prepare some coals to cook it with," said Pierre, heaping fuel upon the fire; "we will need both food and rest to strengthen us for tomorrow's work; and one of the animals is already slaughtered. Ah, here is our portion," he added, as two of his comrades entered, bearing upon their shoulders a quarter of beef, which they laid down beside the fire.

"You must all be tired with your marching and fighting," said Louis; "but Maurice and I have been resting; and we will get the supper, if you will let us. Uncle Pierre, please lend me your knife, that I may cut some slices to broil."

Maurice came eagerly forward to assist, and he and Louis presently had a number of huge slices of beef-steak stuck upon sticks and broiling before the fire. They were very busily employed, but not too much so to lend an attentive ear to the talk going on around them, principally upon the plan of an expedition already contemplated for the morrow.

"Where is Captain Gianavel, Uncle Hubert?" asked Louis, carefully turning a slice of meat.

"Here, my boy. What would you with me?" asked a kindly voice close at his side.

"Oh, you are there, captain!" exclaimed Louis, in some surprise. "I thought you had not come yet."

"I have only just come into the cave, my son," said the warrior, with a grave and rather sad smile. "Your

cookery sends forth an odor very agreeable to hungry men."

"This piece is for you, captain, this other for my father; and the supper is quite ready now," said Louis.

"Then we will ask God's blessing, and begin our meal," said Gianavel; and all, falling on their knees, united with him in the act of worship; after which they partook of the food provided for them, with appetites sharpened by some hours of abstinence and by exercise in the keen mountain-air. Then another and longer prayer was offered, a portion of Scripture repeated from memory,—for there was not light enough to read,—and all retired to rest upon beds of dried moss and leaves spread around the sides of the cave.

The boys had learned that an attack was to be made at daybreak upon the town of San Segonzo, and ere they fell asleep they entered into a whispered agreement between themselves to rise in time to prepare breakfast for the men before they left. This they happily succeeded in doing; and the warriors, strengthened by the food, and by the earnest committing of their just cause to God in prayer, set forth upon their errand with cheerful confidence, the lads following a short distance in the rear, and taking up their position upon a height from which they had a full view of the doomed town.

"Look, Louis! what are those large things—great bundles of something, they seem to be—which they are rolling before them?" asked Maurice, suddenly, after they had been for some moments anxiously watching the onward movement of their friends. "It is not light enough for me to see what they are."

"Bags full of hay," replied Louis. "I heard Captain

Gianavel giving directions about it last night. He said the enemy's bullets would bury themselves in the hay; and so I am sure they do; for see how they are firing now from the walls, and yet none of our men fall."

"They are quite close to the walls now," said Maurice.

"Yes!" exclaimed Louis; "and look at the smoke! they have set fire to the hay, just as Captain Gianavel ordered; and now they will enter the town under cover of the smoke. Hark! I can hear them now battering in the gates."

For some time longer the two watched with breathless eagerness. The hay was quickly consumed, and, as the smoke gradually cleared away, and they had again a distinct view of the walls and roofs of the town, they could see that the gates had been battered in and the Waldenses had effected an entrance; and they could hear, too, the sounds of conflict,—shouts and yells, the clash of arms, and the sharp rattle of musketry; then flames burst out here and there, and dense volumes of smoke rolled up.

"They have taken the town, and set it on fire!" cried both boys, in a breath.

Louis covered his face with his hands, and sank down upon the rock.

"What is the matter, dear Louis?" asked Maurice, in a tone of concern.

"My father!" groaned Louis; "my dear father in the midst of all that terrible fighting! Oh, Maurice, shall I ever see him again?"

"Dear Louis, this is wrong," said the little boy, tenderly. "Your father is one of God's own dear children, and he will not suffer anything to befall him

which is not for his good : no, even if he allows his mortal life to be taken from him, it will only be to give him a crown of immortality in heaven."

"Thank you, dear Maurice," replied Louis, rising ; "I know you are right, and I will try to leave everything in God's hands, and to say from the heart, 'Thy will be done.' But at that moment I felt a sort of conviction that my father had fallen ; and it seemed *very* terrible to me."

"They are returning," said Maurice.

"They are, indeed !" exclaimed Louis, following the direction of his gaze. "Let us go down to meet them." And they began at once a rapid descent of the mountain.

"Is all well?" asked Louis, as soon as he came within hail of the foremost rank.

"God has given us a great victory," was the reply. "Fourteen hundred of the enemy have been made to bite the dust, and we have burned the town, and brought away much booty and some prisoners ; while our own loss is but slight,—only seven men, I am told."

"My father !" cried Louis : "My uncle !" exclaimed Maurice : "are they safe ?"

But the company was hurrying onward, and no one seemed to feel called upon to answer their questions.

Louis leaned, pale and trembling, against a rock.

"My father is dead," he groaned, "and they do not wish to tell me."

"Oh, no, Louis ! oh, no ! I hope it is not that," said Maurice. "But yonder comes my uncle, and he will tell us all."

Louis raised his head, and, turning his pale, agitated face in the direction in which Maurice was looking,

waited in trembling suspense for the news of which Antony might be the bearer.

"My father?" he gasped, as Antony drew near.

"Your father is not dead, Louis," was the reply, in a tone of deep sympathy; "but he is wounded, and wants to speak to you. Come with me, and I will lead you to him. You may come too, Maurice."

Both boys followed him in silence as he led the way down into the valley, where they presently perceived several Waldenses gathered in the shade of a chestnut-tree, one lying upon the grass, while another supported his head, and the rest stood or knelt about him. It was Geoffrey, who lay there bleeding and dying, with his head pillowed upon his brother's breast. Already the pallor of death was on his cheek, and its film gathering over his eye, as his son drew near and knelt, wildly weeping, at his side.

"Louis, my dear son," he gasped, with a feeble effort to lay his hand on the boy's head.

Antony took the dying hand in his, and guided it to its desired resting-place.

"My son, my dear son!" whispered the dying one: "the God of my fathers bless the lad! Cleave close to Christ, Louis, and be ready even to lay down your life for him if he calls you to it. Never forsake him, and he will never forsake you."

The last words were scarcely audible. He ceased; his eyes closed, and they thought his spirit had fled; but it was not so. Again the eyes opened and the lips moved, and Pierre, bending over him, caught the words, "Philip, my little one, farewell." Then, rallying still more, he asked, in a louder key, "Where is my brother?"

"Here, Geoffrey; I am here, dear brother," replied Pierre, much moved. "God helping me, I will be a father to your orphans."

A faint pressure of the cold hand in which his own was grasped, and a bright, sweet smile flitting over the pale features, were the only reply; then a faint whisper, "Yes, Jesus is precious," and all was over.

In his account of the taking of San Segonzo, Muston says, "An entire Irish regiment, numbering from seven to eight hundred men, was cut to pieces, with six hundred and fifty Piedmontese troops. All such of the inhabitants as presented themselves unarmed were spared, and only a portion of them taken away prisoners. The town was then burned.

"It was a terrible execution; but, terrible as it was, it was expedient, in the essential necessity which the Waldenses felt of making their strength appreciated by foes who had hitherto acted toward them as toward sheep, who were to permit themselves to be slaughtered unresistingly. Besides, the Waldensian valleys had been so cruelly devastated, the blood that had been shed cried out so loud, the irritation had become so profound, that, without attributing such reprisals to the spirit of vengeance, one may fairly regard them as a consequence—a necessity. They were useful, moreover, as forcibly impressing on the persecutors the fact that the persecuted were a people not altogether so despicable as had been supposed. Men heed, it is said, only those they love or those they fear. The Waldenses, sure of not being loved, were fain to make themselves feared; they effectually attained this object.

"Already the taking of San Segonzo was worth the gain of a battle to them. They had made fourteen

hundred enemies bite the dust, while the loss on their own side had been but seven men—a fact which, incredible as it may seem, was not only a fact, but became immediately known as such, and diffused a panic terror of Gianavel and Giaheri through all the surrounding towns, which thereupon formed a league for their common defense, and arranged telegraphic signals, which, from the bell-towers, were to give warning of the approach, in any direction, of the Waldenses, and to indicate their position.”

CHAPTER XI.

“They fought, like brave men, long and well;
They piled that ground with Moslem slain;
They conquer’d—but *Bozzaris* fell,
Bleeding at every vein.”

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

It was a lovely morning in June, the 15th of the month. Gianavel and Giaheri, with their forces now augmented to the number of six hundred men, had established their headquarters upon Le Verné, one of the heights of Angrogna. They had not been idle during the two weeks or more which had elapsed since the taking of San Segonzo, but had in the mean time attacked both Bricherasco and La Tour, and, though not entirely successful in either attempt, had inflicted great loss upon the enemy, while theirs was very slight—the Papists losing in the former engagement

one hundred and fifty men slain, and the Waldenses having but one man killed; while in the second, the attack upon La Tour, more than three hundred of the persecutors fell.

But an expedition led by Giaheri against the village of Crussol, for the purpose of obtaining much-needed supplies for the Waldensian army, was still more successful. Crussol was situated in the valley of the Po, and, its inhabitants having done much injury to the Vaudois during the late massacres, Giaheri had resolved to lay them under contribution. He set off in the night at the head of four hundred and fifty men, took possession of the village at daybreak, and, allowing the inhabitants to flee unmolested to a large cavern in the vicinity, drove off more than four hundred cattle and six hundred sheep, which were then taken to the mountain Lionza and divided among the victors.

Meanwhile, one hundred and fifty men had been left at Angrogna, under the command of Laurens and Benet, and, during Giaheri's absence, the Papists of San Segonzo and the adjacent villages had marched to attack them, but had met with a signal repulse from those brave leaders and their equally brave troops.

It was now only two days since this last engagement; but Pianeza, who had vainly endeavored to get rid of his antagonists by setting a price upon the heads of their leaders, had now determined to make a new effort to crush them by superior numbers, and, having been reinforced by another regiment, which had just arrived, he had commanded a simultaneous attack to be this day made upon the Waldenses from four different quarters.

Hubert was standing sentinel upon a height from

which the view was both extensive and beautiful. At his feet lay the valley of Angrogna, with its richly variegated features; its brown crags and green pastures; its mountain-streams, winding gently down verdant, flowery slopes; its hanging woods, lofty precipices, deep glens, and rushing, roaring torrents; while above and beyond, to the west and southwest, towered the Alps. Nearer at hand was La Tour, the Waldensian capital—now, alas! in the hands of their foes; and far away to the east, beyond the intervening hills, spread the magnificent plain of Piedmont, profusely sprinkled with towns, villages, and the summer residences of the nobility; and on the farther side of it rose the turrets and spires of Turin, glittering in the sunbeams.

Hubert was far from insensible to the beauty of the scene; but he sighed as he gazed upon that part of it near at hand and noted how its loveliness had been marred in many places by the ravages of the destroyer. Here and there, where cottages or rustic hamlets had once stood, the abodes of peace and happiness, blackened ruins alone remained to mark the spot. No flocks or herds now grazed upon the grassy slopes; and, where the glad song of the laborer and the merry shouts of children had been wont to be heard, all was now solitude and silence.

Ah! as the brave Christian warrior thought of the terrible sufferings inflicted upon his countrymen and brethren in the Lord, his heart bled for them, even while at the same time it sent up a song of gratitude and praise that to him his heart's best treasures—his gentle, loving wife, his sweet babes, and his dear, aged mother—were yet spared.

The sound of boyish voices came pleasantly to his ear, and, turning his head, he perceived the two lads Louis and Maurice, who were now seldom seen apart, seated on the grass somewhat lower down, with their hands filled with a variety of beautiful wild flowers which they had been gathering.

"How my dear mother used to love flowers!" little Maurice was saying, in a tone of deep sadness; "and how we all loved to gather them for her, and vied with each other which should bring her the first spring blossom! My little sister Marguerite was the one who succeeded this season; and, oh, I little thought when I saw her give it to mother, with such a glad look in her bright eyes, and mother kiss her and smile her thanks so sweetly, that it was to be the last time!"

He ended with a burst of bitter sobs and tears, and Louis, taking his hand and pressing it in his, said, "Our dear mothers do not miss the flowers of earth in the happy home where they now are, and we will not grieve that the dear Saviour has taken them to be with him in that blest abode. My mother loved flowers, too," he added, "and I can never look at one without thinking of her, and how she used to repeat to us those words of the Lord Jesus, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'"

"They are such beautiful words," said Maurice; "and it is such a sweet lesson the Saviour draws from God's care for the flowers and the birds!—that if he so provides for them, we need never fear that he will leave our wants unsupplied. Ah! what a precious

treasure is the Holy Bible! My mother used often to remind us how we should pity and forgive the poor blinded Papists who are deprived of it; and she bade us never, never part with it, nor forget to study it and live by its precepts."

"Dear children!" said Hubert to himself; "may you never forget or neglect the teachings of such parents, but may you follow them, even as they followed Christ! Lord God of their fathers, bless the lads, and keep them ever in thy fear!" he ejaculated, fervently, raising his eyes to the blue heavens above him. "And, oh, remember Zion; look in pity upon her woes! Lord, there be many that rise up against us. Lord, be thou our helper; for thou hast said, I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. Lord, fulfill it unto us this day," he cried, then instantly gave the alarm to his fellow-soldiers, for he had just perceived the approach of the first detachment of the enemy over the heights of Rocepiatta.

The Waldenses, ever watchful, were not taken by surprise, and at once prepared to repulse the foe; but Gianavel had with him only half his troop—but three hundred men; and it was providential indeed that the several divisions of the army of the marquis failed to make their attack simultaneously, as they had been directed to do; for thus the Waldenses were enabled to gain an advantage over the first assailants before either of the other detachments could come to their assistance.

Louis and Maurice, who, on the departure of the men, had hastily climbed to the highest peak in their vicinity, saw this with great satisfaction and deep thankfulness to God.

"The Lord is on our side!" exclaimed Louis, joyfully, "and Gianavel has already gained an advantage."

"Yes, God be praised!" said Maurice. "But ah, see!" he cried, clasping his hands in the intensity of his excitement; "another detachment arrives from Pramol, to attack him in the rear. O God of our fathers, save them! protect us!"

"He will, he will," said Louis. "He never forsakes those who put their trust in him. Look, look, Maurice! our men are making their way to the heights of Roccamante,—to keep the two detachments separate, no doubt. But ah," he groaned, "yonder is a third, coming from San Giovanni, directly in Gianavel's front, and a fourth, moving up the valley from La Tour! What can they do, assailed from every direction, and only three hundred, attacked by so many thousands? O Maurice, Maurice, let us pray! let us cry mightily to Him with whom there is no restraint to save, by many or by few!" And, falling on their knees, they poured out most fervent petitions on behalf of their warrior brethren.

As they rose up again, and once more turned their eyes to the scene of conflict, they saw the heroic band retrograde, before the battalion from Roccapiatta had time to form, dash through the center of that from Pramol, and take up its position on the brow of a hill, which on one side was a succession of gentle slopes, and on the other a sharp and precipitous descent.

Upon seeing this, the leaders of the four hostile battalions united their forces and drew them up at the foot of the slope; and thus the little band of Waldenses was hemmed in between a precipice, on one side, and a force ten times its superior in numbers,

on the other. Yet did not their hearts fail them, for they knew that God was on their side.

For nearly five long hours they maintained unbroken their attitude of defense, while the two lads never left their post of observation, but stood, sat, or knelt there, watching and praying for their success.

"The Papists are growing weary," remarked Louis, at length: "they feel as if they could not stand there much longer."

He was right. The troops of the marquis were growing weary and restless; and this state of things did not escape the quick eye of the Vaudois leader. Raising his hands to heaven, he exclaimed, "O God! it is in thy cause! aid and preserve us!" Then his loud shout, "Forward!" reached even to the ears of the patient watchers on the crag, and instantly, like an avalanche of pikes, swords, and bullets, the whole three hundred dashed impetuously down the slope.

But the enemy, without awaiting their shock, fell back for the purpose of deploying in the plain, thus weakening their line: the sudden charge of the Waldenses broke it, utter disorder ensued, and those three thousand men fled in panic terror, pursued by the Waldenses, who killed more than five hundred of them, themselves having but one man killed and two wounded.

With hand fast clasped in hand, throbbing hearts sending up many a silent prayer, and eyes that grew dim with tears of joy as they gazed, the boys watched the conflict.

"Thanks be to God, the hearer of prayer, they are completely victorious!" exclaimed Louis, at length. "See! the enemy is driven entirely out of Val Angrogna, and now our men are returning."

"They are carrying one," said Maurice, with a sigh; "one has fallen in the good cause."

They hastened to the intrenchments, whither the others were going, and on reaching them were rejoiced to learn that their relatives and particular friends had returned unharmed; the one who had fallen, and the two who were wounded, being comparative strangers.

Giaheri, coming from Pragela with the rest of the troops, reached the intrenchments at the same moment with Gianavel. Both parties were fatigued, the one with fighting, the other with marching, and were glad of an opportunity to rest and refresh themselves with food,—Gianavel's men especially, for they had eaten nothing since morning. The boys—though they too, in their anxiety to watch the conflict, had fasted since an early breakfast—forgot their own hunger and fatigue, and exerted themselves to prepare and serve out food and drink to the men; particularly to their uncles and Captain Gianavel, for whom they had already conceived the most ardent affection and admiration; for Gianavel was not only a brave and accomplished warrior, but an earnest Christian, a man of faith and prayer, than whom none ever had a more absolute confidence in God, or was better fitted to win the respect and love of those who knew him well.

He received the attentions of the lads with a grave but pleasant smile, thanking them more than once for their services, but rose and walked away ere he had eaten half enough to satisfy them.

"He has gone to reconnoiter the enemy, no doubt," said Hubert, looking after him, as with hasty step he climbed the crags. "Certainly none can accuse our captain of a lack of vigilance."

"He will wear himself out, I'm afraid," said Louis, in a tone of concern; "he has scarcely taken time to rest himself at all, and has eaten very little."

"He cares far more for the cause, and for his men also, than for himself," remarked Pierre.

"Yes," assented Antony; "and never was leader better beloved by his men than he."

But a few moments had passed, when Gianavel was seen returning with all speed.

"Come!" he cried to his men; "the enemy are rallying in the plain of San Giovanni, but are still in disorder, and evidently far from expecting an attack: let us fall upon them at once."

It was but the work of a moment for every man to seize his gun, fall into rank, and follow their general; and, ere the foe had any warning of their approach, they swept down the heights and fell upon them like lightning, putting them to the rout, and killing one hundred.

But, alas! this victory proved worse than a defeat to the Waldenses; for, in the rapid engagement, Gianavel, their intrepid, talented, and beloved leader,—whose loss no one could replace,—was hit by a ball, which, entering his chest, passed entirely through his body.

Hubert, who was near, seeing him stagger, and perceiving that he was wounded, sprang forward and caught him in his arms just in time to save him from falling.

The enemy had fled; and the Waldenses, returning from the pursuit, gathered about their leader.

His mouth was filled with blood: he had fainted, and for a moment they thought him dead; but he re-

vived, and, looking round upon his weeping soldiers, asked for Giaheri.

"I am here, captain," was the answer of the brave warrior, who stood close at his side. "God be praised, that you are still alive!"

"Yes," said Gianavel, "but I am dangerously wounded, I fear. Giaheri, to you I intrust the command."

He then proceeded to give his instructions, saying, in conclusion, "Do not undertake anything further to-day; the troops are too much fatigued."

Meantime, Antony Romano, Pierre Masson, and several others had been actively engaged in preparing a litter, upon which they now laid their wounded chief, moving him with the greatest care and tenderness; then, raising it upon their shoulders, they carried him to Pinache, where, after six weeks' suffering, his wound healed.

Weeping and praying, believing their beloved leader to be mortally wounded, his soldiers returned to their intrenchments, Giaheri no less afflicted than the rest by the calamity which devolved the chief command upon him. Bitter indeed was the grief of the two lads when they heard the sad news.

"Come with me, Maurice," said Louis, at length, drawing his friend's arm through his; and together they descended into the valley, and turned their steps toward a spot that Louis often visited—the grave of his father.

"Oh," sobbed the boy, as he knelt down beside it, and laid his head upon the green turf with which his own loving hands had covered it, "how glad I am that he is spared this sorrow!—that he has gone to that

blessed, happy place where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away!"

"Yes," said Maurice; "I am often glad when I think how very happy mother and father and all of them are; though I can't help feeling sorry for myself. But, oh, Louis, do you think dear, good Captain Gianavel will die? Will God take him away, when we need him so much?"

"I don't know," replied Louis, sorrowfully; "my father has often told me that God does not need any of his creatures; that he can accomplish his designs just as well without them, though it is often his pleasure to use them as instruments. Captain Gianavel is very sorely wounded, Unele Hubert told me; but we know that God is able to heal him if he sees best, and let us ask him, Maurice, with our whole hearts, to spare him to the good cause—the Lord's own cause—and raise him up again very soon. Captain Giaheri is as good and brave as man can be; but he says himself that he is not so wise in these matters as Captain Gianavel, whose place no one can fill."

"Yes," said Maurice; "let us pray now, and God will hear us; for you know how we prayed on the heights this morning, and what a victory he gave our troops."

Maurice knelt down beside his friend as he spoke, and, clasping their hands, they spent some moments in fervent prayer for the restoration of their beloved chief.

They had risen from their knees, and were turning away from the spot, when a stranger, who seemed to have been observing them from a little distance, drew

near, and asked, in an insinuating tone, "Can you show me the way to the Vaudois camp, my lads?"

Louis gazed earnestly at him ere he ventured to reply. He thought the man seemed to shrink slightly from his scrutiny, and there was something in his face which he did not like: so his answer was given with caution.

"I know not your errand to the Vaudois camp," he said; "but, if you have aught to communicate, I am ready to carry your message."

"Nay," said the man; "I desire a personal interview with your leader. My errand is much too important to intrust to one so young."

"Then remain here until I return," said Louis; and, taking Maurice's hand, he hastened to seek Giaheri and communicate to him the request of the stranger.

"Where is he? I will go and speak to him," said Giaheri, starting up from the ground where they had found him sitting.

"Not alone, captain!" exclaimed several of his men, springing to their feet. "The fellow may be an emissary from Pianeza, with designs upon your life."

"Come with me, then, as many of you as choose," he replied, moving away, some dozen or more of them following.

The man was still standing where the boys had left him; and as Giaheri drew near, he saluted him respectfully.

"I come, captain," he said, "to tell you that the town of Ocasco is but poorly defended, and if you will dispatch even a small force against it at once, it will, no doubt, be easily taken."

Giaheri looked much pleased. "What say you, my men?" he asked, turning to them. "Shall we make the attempt to-night?"

"That is for you to decide, captain," they said. "Wherever you lead, we are prepared to follow."

"I know that, my brave fellows," he replied; "but I fear you are too much fatigued with what you have already gone through to-day."

"It would be a great pity to lose so favorable an opportunity," remarked the stranger. "I am here to guide you, and am well acquainted with every inch of the road, and there cannot be the smallest doubt of the success of the enterprise if undertaken at once; but, if delayed even another day, it may fail, in consequence of reinforcements being thrown into the town."

In listening to this artful speech, Giaheri forgot entirely his own fatigue and that of his men; and, filled with an eager desire to signalize himself and advance the good cause by some effective stroke, he summoned to his aid forty-five of his men,* which he deemed a sufficient number for the enterprise, and set out at once, under the guidance of the stranger.

Hubert was one of the party; but Antony and Pierre, having not yet returned from Pinache, whither they had assisted in conveying the wounded chieftain, escaped the calamity which presently overtook Giaheri's little band.

The day was now drawing near its close, and, already much fatigued, they found the march to Osasco both long and toilsome; and, though following their leader

* Muston says one hundred and fifty—Morland, forty-five.

without murmur or hesitation, the symptoms of weariness perceptible in their gait and manner did not escape the watchful eye of the guide.

"I see your men are very tired," he said, turning to Giaheri ere they had quite reached their destination. "They evidently need rest and refreshment, and will fight all the better for it if we turn aside and halt for half an hour at yonder country-house." And he pointed, as he spoke, to a comfortable farm-house, standing in a little glen not far from the roadside, its white walls plainly discernible in the twilight, against the dark background of a wood that lay between it and the hills on the farther side.

"I know the family who occupy it," he continued, "and can promise you a kindly reception and a welcome to their hospitality; for they are favorable to your cause."

"It is a good suggestion," replied Giaheri. "An hour's halt here will still leave sufficient time for our enterprise; and I feel that we would all be the better prepared for it by a little food and rest."

"You will not have cause to regret it, I am sure," said the guide, leading the way toward the dwelling he had pointed out.

In five minutes more they had halted at the gate; and the farmer, coming out in answer to the call of the guide, invited them to come in, bidding them welcome to the best his house afforded.

The invitation was accepted; a sentinel was stationed at the gate to guard against surprise, and the others entered the house, where they were presently served with bread olives, and wine from the farmer's own vintage.

But scarcely had they begun their meal when Giaheri started to his feet with a sudden exclamation, and, grasping his sword, rushed to the door, while at the same instant the sentinel gave the alarm that an enemy was at hand, and all ears caught the sound of the tramping of horses and the ring of steel.

In a moment the brave Vaudois leader was in the yard fronting the house, followed by all his little band.

One glance showed them that they were completely surrounded by a squadron of Savoy cavalry.

"We are betrayed!" cried the sentinel.

"Traitor, thou hast betrayed us!" exclaimed Giaheri, turning to the faithless guide and instantly running him through with his sword. Then, raising his hands, he cried, aloud, "Lord God of our fathers, aid us in this extremity! Lord, it is thy cause!" And, calling upon his men to sell their lives dearly, he and they threw themselves, sword in hand, upon the enemy, and made terrible slaughter in their ranks ere they were overpowered by superior numbers. Every man of the little band fought with determined bravery, but it was against fearful odds; and at length Giaheri fell, covered with wounds, his son died by his side, and all were slain except one, who, seeing that he alone was left, turned and fled, hotly pursued by the enemy.

A swamp near by seemed to offer a hope of escape, and he plunged into it. The cavalry dared not follow him thither on horseback, and ere they could dismount and renew the pursuit on foot he had happily succeeded in concealing himself so effectually that they could not find him. It was Hubert. He remained for some hours in his hiding-place, then, escaping under cover of the darkness, swam the Clusone, and returned

to the Vaudois camp, carrying to his remaining companions the sad news of their terrible loss.

Day was just breaking over the mountain-tops when Antony Romano, who had a few moments before relieved the sentinel on guard at the entrance of the encampment, saw a man slowly toiling up the ascent from the valley of Angrogna. Unable, in the dim, uncertain light, to distinguish friend from foe, he immediately challenged the stranger, ordering him to halt and give the countersign.

It was given in a familiar voice; and the next moment his brother Hubert stood before him, pale, footsore, and weary, covered with mud, and dripping wet.

"Hubert, my dear brother!" he cried; "what has befallen you and the rest? You are in a sad plight, and, alas! I fear you bring evil tidings."

"Yes, Antony, that emissary was a traitor: he led us into an ambush, and Giaheri is slain; they are all slain, and I only am left to tell it," replied Hubert, in tones of anguish, as he sank exhausted upon the grass at his brother's feet.

Antony's challenge had startled many of the Waldenses from their slumbers, and already a group of eager listeners had gathered about the brothers, and quickly the sad story flew from mouth to mouth, carrying grief and despondency to every heart.

"Our sins have brought these calamities upon us," they said, in tones of bitter sorrow.

"Yes, that is, alas! too true," said Antony; "but let us repent and 'turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon us, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'"

"Let us not despair," said another; "he may hide his face for a moment, but he has not forsaken us. He will remember Zion, and the set time to favor her shall come. Men may perish, but Jehovah ever liveth; and in him will we put our trust."

Thus, while deeply mourning the loss of their loved and valued leader, they still encouraged each other to stay upon an almighty arm and look to God with unflinching confidence.

Muston says of the fallen chieftain, "Giahari was a man zealous alike in the service of God and in the cause of his country; brave as a lion, humble as a lamb, and ever assigning the praise of his victories to the Lord; a master of the Scriptures, and well versed in controversy; a man of great intellect, and whose only fault was the incapacity to moderate his valor."

CHAPTER XII.

"For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
O God, our fathers' God!
Thou hast made thy children mighty
By the touch of the mountain-sod."

MRS. HEMANS.

NEARLY a month had rolled by since the death of Giahari and the supposed mortal wounding of Gianavel. These sad events raised the courage of the Papists for a time, and persecution received a new impulse; but, on the other hand, the story of the terrible wrongs of the Waldenses, and of their wonderful feats of valor,

having spread abroad over all Europe, much sympathy was excited for them: the Protestant powers interfered on their behalf, earnestly remonstrating with the duke on the cruelty and injustice of his treatment of these his unoffending subjects; the sufferings of the Waldensian martyrs exalted their cause in the eyes of the pious; the admirers of military skill and soldierly daring were interested by the heroic deeds of the fallen leaders and their brave followers, and soldiers came to their assistance from almost every country. They had also some brave and skillful leaders of their own yet left, and Gianavel too was recovering; so that the prospects of these poor persecuted folk seemed less dark now than they had some weeks before.

It was the afternoon of the 11th of July. Louis and Maurice had strolled away from the camp, and, climbing the heights in search of flowers and wild strawberries, had come somewhat unexpectedly upon the place where once had stood the little mountain-hamlet of which Martin Rostagnol's cottage had formed a part. It was Louis's first visit to the spot since the massacre; and Maurice had never seen it before.

"There is scarcely one stone left upon another," said Louis, gazing sadly about him; "and I cannot even point out the precise spot where Martin's cottage stood."

"You have been here before, then?" questioned Maurice.

"Oh, yes, often during those weeks after we left La Tour; for it was here that my uncle and aunt took refuge while we were in Angrogna," replied Louis, who had long since confided the whole story of his life to his young friend. "Martin Rostagnol opened

his doors to them, and it was in his house little Hugo died; and they were most kind to Aunt Aline in her affliction, feeling for her as if she had been their own sister and daughter."

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," murmured Mauriee.

"Yes," said Louis; "such are the words of our blessed Lord; and truly Martin and his wife and daughter gave good evidence that they were indeed his disciples. But, alas!" he added, with a shudder, "what a sad fate was theirs!"

"Yes," replied Mauriee, in low, quivering tones; "but it was soon over; and the glory and bliss will last throughout eternal ages."

Louis made no reply except to press his friend's hand; and, turning away, they went slowly and sadly down the mountain.

"Look, Mauriee! who can they be?" exclaimed Louis, as on turning the corner of a projecting rock they came suddenly in sight of two men who were coming toward them from the opposite side of the valley.

"One is a stranger, I am quite certain," said Mauriee. "He has a foreign look; he wears the dress of a Swiss. But the other—O Louis, can it be? Ah, yes! it is, it is the Barba Leger!" And with a joyful cry the boys sprang down the rocks and ran to meet him.

"Is it you, my children?" he said, receiving them with a fatherly embrace. "And how has it fared with you and your dear parents in these troublous times?"

In vain Mauriee strove to reply in words: they came not at his bidding; but his slender finger pointed up-

ward, and his eyes were turned toward heaven, while the tears streamed fast down his pale and sunken cheeks; and Louis murmured, in heart-broken accents, "Maurice is alone, Barba Leger, and I have but my little brother Philip and Uncle Pierre left to me."

"Is it indeed so, my poor, poor children?" said the pastor, feelingly. "May the God of the fatherless bless, comfort, and provide for you! He will never forsake those who put their trust in him. He has not forsaken his cause in these valleys, but has inclined the hearts of many to pity and help his poor persecuted flock. Here is the brave Colonel Andrion," he added, turning toward his companion,—“a noble Swiss who has generously come to aid us in our struggle.”

"My poor little fellows, I am truly sorry for your cruel afflictions," said the colonel, in a tone of deep sympathy, as he kindly took a hand of each; "and I would that I, and others who sympathize in your good and holy cause, could have come in time to avert the sad fate of your relatives."

Louis answered gratefully, and his eyes sparkled through gathering tears as he looked up into the officer's face; for he had heard of Colonel Andrion's gallant exploits in Sweden, France, and Germany.

"You will guide us to the Vaudois camp, Louis?" said Leger. "They are intrenched upon La Vachera, are they not?"

"Yes, Barba Leger," replied the boy, leading the way; "and every soldier there will rejoice at the sight of your face."

"The joy will be mutual, my son," said the pastor. But tell me: is Captain Gianavel with you again?"

"He is, sir," replied Louis. "God has graciously

spared his precious life, and restored him to us, so that we have the comfort and support of his presence,—though he can aid us only by his counsels; for he is not yet strong enough to take any active part in an engagement.”

“Praise and thanks be to the Lord that his valuable life has been spared,” said the pastor, “and that he did not share the fate of the brave Giaheri! We could ill spare either of them; and yet the Lord is able to save by even the feeblest instrumentality.”

“That was a dreadful day, Barba Leger,” said Louis, sighing, “when Captain Gianavel was so sorely wounded, and Captain Giaheri slain; and you too were far away: we would indeed have been in despair if we had not put our trust in the Lord.”

“‘Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils.’ ‘Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,’” repeated Leger, emphatically. “God often takes away one earthly prop after another, that we may learn to look to him alone for deliverance.”

They moved on for a time in silence, slowly toiling up the mountain-side. There lay the still lovely valley at their feet, lovely even amid all the ruin and desolation its enemies had wrought; and with poignant grief Leger gazed upon its devastated fields and vineyards and its dismantled and deserted homes.

“Ah, Lord God, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?” he murmured. “Is thy mercy clean gone forever?”

The words were spoken low and mournfully, but they caught the ear of Louis.

“Nay, Barba Leger,” he answered, respectfully.

“He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him. He also will hear their prayer, and will save them.”

“Yes, my son,” replied the pastor: “the Lord preserveth all them that love him; but all the wicked will he destroy.”

A few moments more brought them to the Vaudois camp; and, though no loud acclamations, no noisy demonstrations of joy, greeted their loved barba’s arrival, as the brave soldiers gathered about him,—alas! too recent and too terrible for that had been the trials through which they had passed, the bereavements they had suffered, since last they had looked upon his face—yet the warm grasp of the hand, the fervent “God bless you!” “God be praised that you are with us once more!” spoken not lightly, but often with a trembling lip and tearful eye, left no doubt of their affection, or of the heartfelt pleasure it gave them to see him once again in their midst.

Warmly and gratefully they greeted Colonel Andrion also, whom Leger introduced as one whose heart God had touched with compassion for their sufferings, and who, with much military knowledge and renown, had come to aid them to the utmost of his power.

At length, while Andrion engaged in conversation with the French general Descombies, and others, Gianavel drew Leger aside, and, seating themselves upon a jutting rock, they talked freely to each other of all that had occurred during the absence of the latter, and of future plans and prospects.

“God be praised, Gianavel, that I find you again at your post!” said Leger, pressing his friend’s hand warmly in his own. “When first the news of your wound reached me, I feared that your work on earth

was done; and, though I know that the Lord is assuredly able to work by any instrumentality, even the feeblest, I felt that your death would be an irreparable loss to our cause. But he has in mercy spared you."

"His mercy to me has been great and undeserved," said Gianavel. "Help me to pray that the life he has spared may be wholly devoted to his service. 'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.' Ah, my friend, though he is hastening us sorely for our sins, yet there is much mercy mingled with it. My wound was painful and dangerous, but is now nearly healed; while the loss we sustained in the death of our beloved brother, the brave and gallant Giaheri, is, as it were, in a great measure repaired by the generous aid of these gallant officers and men whom He has inclined to come to our assistance from the neighboring countries."

"What force have you now at your command?" asked Leger.

"Eighteen hundred armed men, including a small body of cavalry under the command of Charles Feautrier," replied Gianavel.

"You are strongly intrenched here, I see," remarked the moderator, running his eye rapidly over the barricades which loomed up before and behind them. "Do you look for an early attack?"

"An attack would not greatly surprise us at any time," replied Gianavel; "but I do not know the enemy's exact position, and I purpose to send out scouts to-night toward La Tour, to ascertain it. But bring you aught of good news, barba? is there hope of intervention on our behalf by the Protestant powers?"

"There is," said Leger: "they are already addressing

earnest remonstrances to the duke, principally through the exertions of England's Protector, Cromwell, who has displayed extraordinary zeal and activity in favor of this afflicted people. As early as the 25th of May, he addressed a letter to the King of France, as doubtless you have heard ere this, urging his majesty to use his authority and influence with the duke to induce him to withdraw his edict and treat his Vaudois subjects with less severity. Our merciful God inclined the king to accede to the Protector's request, and, while remonstrating with the duke, to offer shelter and protection to the fugitives from these valleys. Cromwell has also addressed letters of similar import to the Kings of Norway and Denmark, and the other Protestant powers; and, not content with that, he has now dispatched an ambassador extraordinary to the court of Savoy, to give a full explanation of his sentiments in regard to this matter. I am told, also, that the ambassadors from France, Holland, and Switzerland have received similar instructions from their several governments."

"All these are hopeful signs and reasons for sincere gratitude to God," said Gianavel; "and yet our great reliance, under him, must still be upon our own vigilance and energy in meeting and repelling every attack of the Popish troops; and not only that, but in successfully attacking them in turn, and thus imbuing them with a salutary fear of us."

For hours the whole camp had been wrapped in slumber; the deep hush of night was over all nature, and no sound broke the stillness save the measured tread of the sentinel as he paced slowly to and fro, ever watchful for the approach of danger. The two

boys lay sleeping side by side. A slight noise aroused them; and Maurice, starting up, asked, "What was that?"

"Only the changing of the guard," replied Louis. "It must be long past midnight, but not time to rise yet." And Maurice, sinking back upon his rude couch, was sound asleep again in a moment.

But not so his companion. Thoughts came crowding thickly into his mind; thoughts of past perils, and of those which might be impending, effectually driving away all inclination to sleep. He knew that his uncle Pierre, who had become doubly endeared to the fatherless boy in his sad orphanage, was now on guard; and a vague fear for his safety impelled him to rise and seek to share his watch. He did so, moving very cautiously and quietly, lest he should disturb Maurice, and, stealing softly past the sleeping forms that lay near and around him, was presently at his uncle's side.

But Pierre, lost in thought, and watchful only of that quarter from which danger might be apprehended, did not perceive his approach.

"How long, O Lord, how long shall thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?" Louis heard him say, as with bowed head he moved back and forth along his beat. "'O Lord, in the midst of wrath remember mercy.' See how this beautiful land has been made desolate, how it has been laid waste with fire and sword. Lord, does not the blood of thy slaughtered ones cry aloud to thee from the ground? and wilt thou not now arise for the sighing of the oppressed, and set him in safety from him that puffeth at him?"

"I will not disturb him," thought Louis. "Oh

that his prayers for our beloved Zion may be heard! Surely so much innocent blood must indeed ery aloud in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and he will speedily avenge his own elect."

And, folding his arms, the boy stood leaning over the barricade and gazing down into the valley, almost imagining that he could see through the gloom the dim outline of a ruined village, and the church near it, with its quiet grave-yard, the dear spot where reposed the mortal remains of his beloved father.

"Nay, it is impossible, with no light but what the stars can give," he murmured to himself. "But the dawn cannot be far distant," he added, turning his face toward the east. "Ah, yes! even now I perceive some faint sign of its coming."

In this he was not mistaken, and ere long the light had so far increased that the outlines of each mountain and hill could be distinctly traced, and even in the valley the larger objects were quite distinguishable.

"Unele," cried Louis, suddenly starting up from his leaning posture and pointing in the direction of La Tour, "see you yonder moving objects there, far down in the valley? I cannot tell, in the uncertain light, whether they are animals or men; but surely they draw nearer."

"Yes," said Pierre, "they do; and I think they are men," he added, as the increasing light and the lessening distance brought them more distinctly into view; "but whether friends or foes I know not; but we shall soon see: they are almost within hail. Who goes there?" he cried, the next moment. "Halt, and give the countersign, or I fire!"

Then, as the answer came back, distinct and clear,

"Ah, Louis," he said, "they are our own scouts, returning from reconnoitering the enemy."

In another moment the scouts came panting up the ascent, and in answer to Pierre's anxious question, "What news?" replied, hurriedly, "Arouse the camp, without a moment's delay! We are about to be attacked, and every man should be at his post. A detachment of Popish troops is probably already on the march from San Lorenzo, where we passed the night."

Pierre's loud challenge had already awakened many of his sleeping comrades, and, almost before the scouts were done speaking, the news had spread through the whole camp, and, on all sides, men were springing to arms.

With calm promptitude Gianavel's orders were given, and, ere the enemy appeared in sight, God's blessing had been invoked, and every man, with his weapon in his hand, stood prepared to meet and repel the assault.

After much earnest importunity, the boys had gained permission to remain, and assist by loading for the men. They stationed themselves near their uncles, and, outwardly as calm and fearless as they, though with hearts beating wildly between hope and fear, awaited the onset of the Papists, who could now be seen moving up the valley in four battalions, the tops of their spears glittering in the first beams of the morning sun.

On, on they came; but not a heart in the Waldensian ranks quailed before them. Steadily, firmly, their attack was met and repulsed, and though renewed again and again, it was only to meet with the same result: the Waldenses, though greatly inferior in number—being only a few hundreds, while there were four

battalions of the Papists—having, as usual, the advantages of position and of a good cause.

Thus the conflict raged from five in the morning until three in the afternoon; but at length, the ammunition of the Waldenses becoming exhausted, the lower barricade was taken, and they retreated to one higher up, called the Donjon, the Papists, who now fondly imagined themselves at last victorious, pursuing, and insolently crying out, “Advance, wreck of Gianavel!”

But the Waldenses, on reaching their second barricade, again made a determined stand—again repulsed the enemy, who were now within a spear’s-length of this second intrenchment; some of those who had no more powder or shot using slings and stones, while others, climbing the overhanging precipices, detached masses of rock and hurled them upon the heads of the advancing foe. The effect was sudden and terrible; for many of the rocks, being launched from the summit and meeting others in their descent, were shattered to pieces, and fell upon the Popish ranks like a heavy discharge of grape-shot, crushing or disabling whole columns, and driving from their places of concealment numbers of their sharpshooters, who, hidden in the crevices of the rocks or by the trees and bushes, had been taking deadly aim at the Waldenses without exposing themselves. Many of the Papists wore on their persons certain charms, which they believed rendered the wearer bullet-proof; but, finding them utterly powerless to turn aside even one of these stones or splinters of rock, they were seized with a panic, and, abandoning their posts, fled in wild confusion, while the Waldenses, crying, in their turn,

"Advance, wreck of San Segonza!" poured down upon them, sword in hand, and thus completed their discomfiture, driving the whole army before them. Two hundred were left dead upon the field, and more than twice as many wounded were carried off. So great was the number of dead and wounded brought into Luserna, that one of their magistrates exclaimed, on seeing them, "How is this? Formerly, the wolves used to devour the dogs; but the day is now arrived when the dogs devour the wolves."*

Some time after this victory, a night-attack upon La Tour was planned by the leaders of the Waldensian army. It was to be led by the French general Descombies, aided by the cavalry under Charles Feautrier, another French refugee; while Gianavel, yet too weak to take part in an actual engagement, proposed to watch the progress of the affair from an eminence overlooking the town, that thus he might be ready to sound a retreat should circumstances render it necessary. Hearing this, the young lads Louis and Maurice begged the privilege of bearing him company, and, their request being granted, the three set out before the troops left their encampment, and gained their post of observation in time to watch the movement of the different corps as they crossed the valley on their way to the proposed point of attack.

The little army now numbered eighteen hundred men; and, remembering the glorious achievements of less than half that number under the leadership of Gianavel, the hopes of the lads rose high as they

* "Barbetti"—literally, dogs—was the common term of reproach applied by the Papists to their Waldensian neighbors

gazed upon the gallant array; but, expecting to see them move directly upon the town, it was with both surprise and chagrin, not unmixed with impatience, that they presently beheld them halt while as yet but little more than half-way there.

"See, Captain Gianavel, they halt already, although they have gone no farther than the foot of Monte Chiabesso, which is almost a mile from La Tour," said Maurice. "Why do they not move on at once and take the town before the garrison has had time to hear of their approach?"

"I do not know, my son," replied the chieftain, in a tone not wholly free from anxiety and disappointment; "but it is, no doubt, by order of General Descombies. Probably he has sent some of his men to reconnoiter, and now waits to hear their report."

"It must be hard for our brave fellows to be thus forced to stand still, while by the delay the chances of success are lessening every moment!" cried Louis, impetuously. "I would not be controlled by the French general, were I in Captain Bellino's place, but would rush on at once and take the city by storm before the inhabitants had time to awake from their slumbers. See! all is quiet there now, and they are not dreaming of an attack."

"Descombies is in command," replied Gianavel, gravely. "And, my son, talk not of the chances of success: the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but it is God alone who giveth the victory."

"Nay, Captain Gianavel, I meant it not in that sense," replied the boy, with a deep blush; "for I know that the horse may be prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord."

"Yes," replied the chieftain, "and, except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

A few moments the three looked on in silence, and then Louis earnestly requested permission to run down and inquire the cause of the delay; which being granted, he bounded away down the mountain-side, and quickly disappeared amid the shadows of the trees and shrubs.

"Yes," said Gianavel, looking off toward La Tour, and speaking more to himself than to Maurice, "Descombies has sent some of his Frenchmen to reconnoiter. I see them returning. And now there will presently be a movement in one direction or the other."

The Frenchmen brought word that the citadel was impregnable, and Descombies, saying that he was unwilling to compromise, in his first engagement, the men intrusted to his care, at once sounded a retreat, and withdrew with the van of the army toward La Vachera.

This occurred just as Louis, all breathless with his rapid descent, reached the spot where the rear, under the command of Captains Bellino and Peronello, yet lingered, unwilling to give up so readily the object of their expedition. There was some murmuring among them, as Louis drew near.

"Descombies has never seen the Vaudois fight," said one.

"No," replied another; "and had we but made an instant assault upon the town I am persuaded we should have taken it; for it is the Lord's cause, and he would have aided us, even as he did the other day, when they came out to burn the remnant of our crops, and, under Captain Bellino, we drove them back to the very gates of the town."

"Let us assault it now!" exclaimed a third: "even

with our reduced numbers I believe we can succeed; seeing the Lord is on our side."

"What is the matter, uncle? have they abandoned the enterprise?" asked Louis, making his way to Pierre, who stood leaning on his musket and watching with deep interest an earnest conversation going on between two or three of the Waldensian leaders.

"Descombies' scouts have reported the citadel impregnable," replied Pierre, "and he has withdrawn toward La Vachera with the van of the army; but Bellino and Peronello, I see, are consulting on the feasibility of attacking without his aid."

Scarcely had Pierre ceased speaking, when Bellino, hastily approaching the spot where they stood, called, in a cheerful tone, to his men to fall into line again, for that he and Peronello had decided to lead them to the assault without delay.

This order was instantly and eagerly obeyed; while Louis, waiting but a moment to see them move off, hastened back to Gianavel with his report; but by the time he reached the height where the chieftain stood, the troops could be seen already advancing upon the town.

With breathless interest the lads watched the progress of the attack—now and then turning a glance of wonder upon the calm face of their companion—saw the Waldenses make their way safely into the town, occupy all the leading streets, set fire to and burn down the Capuchin monastery, and then advance upon the citadel.

"Do you think they will take it, Captain Gianavel?" asked Louis, in a voice trembling with excitement.

"If the Lord will," he replied. "I think they can-

not hold out much longer, unless reinforcements come to their aid, for which I fear that ill-advised delay has given time. Ah, it is indeed so ! Yonder comes the regiment of M. de Marolles, marching from Luserna to their assistance."

So saying, he at once sounded a retreat, which his brave men instantly obeyed, avoiding the superior force of the enemy by their better knowledge of the locality, and thus withdrawing in safety.

CHAPTER XIII.

"It is a vain attempt
To bind th' ambitious and unjust by treaties;
These they elude a thousand specious ways;
Or, if they cannot find a fair pretext,
They blush not in the face of Heaven to break them."

THOMSON: *Coriolanus*.

WHILE these events were taking place in the valleys, the remonstrances of the Protestant powers on behalf of the poor persecuted folk had grown more and more emphatic.

Cromwell had sent Sir Samuel Morland as a special ambassador to the court of Savoy, to present letters of strong remonstrance, and to demand an audience for the purpose of making a public declaration of the indignation felt in England on account of the treatment of the Waldenses; and, this audience being granted, he, after a few of the customary expressions of courtesy, proceeded to speak such plain truths as none but a

republican would venture to address to royal ears,—describing the terrible devastation of the valleys by the Popish troops, and also some of the horrible cruelties they had perpetrated ; the dreadful tortures they had inflicted upon their wretched and helpless victims, of whom he spoke as “your very poor subjects and most disconsolate outcasts,” earnestly beseeching and entreating the duke, in the name of the Protector and the whole commonwealth of England, to extend mercy to those afflicted people.

In the words of Muston, “This oration, stamped with the energetic unction of the Puritan, pronounced with the manly confidence of youth and courage, produced a deep sensation. Charles Emanuel made no reply ; but the duchess, instructed beforehand by her Jesuit advisers, said, ‘We are deeply sensible of the interest your master takes in our subjects, but surprised that he should listen to such inaccurate statements as those upon which he has evidently acted. Were he better informed of the facts, he would know that what have been represented to him as barbarities were nothing more than mild and paternal chastisement inflicted on rebellious subjects, whose revolt no sovereign could overlook. Nevertheless, in manifestation of our desire to be agreeable to his serene highness, we will not only pardon them, but restore them to our favor, and to the privileges which their ill conduct has forfeited.’ ”

Thrown off his guard by this promise, Morland left Turin on the 19th of July, promising to return and take part, on behalf of the Waldenses, in the negotiations to take place concerning them. But in his absence the business was purposely hurried through to a cou-

clusion, in order that the less might be granted. On the 18th of August, this treaty of peace, called the Patent of Grace, was concluded at Pignerol, in the presence of the Swiss envoys, who had arrived after Morland's departure, and under the influence of the French ambassador, Servient.

It was a most shameful affair, leaving the Waldenses more than ever at the mercy of their foes, under the mask of protecting them. The Swiss ambassadors tried to obtain better securities for the safety of the poor persecuted folk, but their efforts were ineffectual.

Hostilities now ceased; the processes instituted against Leger, Gianavel, and others were annulled by the treaty; the Waldensian army disbanded, and the fugitives returned to their loved valleys; but, alas! not to the dear homes from which they had been driven, not to the companionship of the loved ones slain, or to the comforts they had formerly known; for they were steeped in poverty and distress. Their cattle were gone, their fields and vineyards laid waste, their homes in ruins; nor had they money or material with which to repair their losses or rebuild their houses.

Pierre and Aline found their dwelling still standing, and were allowed to return to it; but it was all that was left of their earthly possessions. They were without provisions, furniture, or clothing, except a very little of the last, which they had carried with them in their flight.

But neither Pierre nor his gentle young wife made any complaint. They had been spared to each other, and still had health and strength to labor for their own

support and that of the orphans committed to their care; and for this they were truly thankful.

Hubert and Madalena were even less fortunate. A sad scene of desolation met their view on reaching the spot they had once so fondly called their own little home. The bare walls of their cottage were still left standing, but roofless and blackened with smoke, for the fire kindled by the incendiary torch of their monkish persecutors had devoured all that was combustible about the dwelling, and scorched and injured the beautiful overshadowing chestnut and mulberry trees. The little porch, too, where they had loved to sit in the summer evenings, was all torn away; the garden, vineyard, and field were trampled till not a vestige of vegetation was left; their cow and oxen also had fallen a prey to the Popish troops: in short, the fruits of years of industrious toil were entirely destroyed, and nothing was left them with which to begin the world anew; nothing but strong hands, stout hearts, and a firm trust in God,—that God who has said, “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

Daniel Girardet's dwelling had escaped rather better than Hubert's, having one room still in tolerably habitable condition; but of the rest of the houses composing the hamlet, not one stone was left upon another. And, alas! worse than all, many of the former inhabitants had fallen victims to the fierce rage and hatred of their foes—had been slain by bullet or sword, thrown over the precipices and dashed in pieces upon the rocks below, or carried away captives.

Of the despoiled, bereaved survivors, some had

reached the spot in advance of Hubert, others nearly at the same time, and others still came toiling up the ascent shortly afterward. They drew near together, and with mutual expressions of sympathy and condolence, mutual exhortations to submission to their heavenly Father's will and unwavering trust in his promised care, began to concert plans for making the women and children as comfortable as possible during the approaching night. Shelter was needed; for in that elevated region the nights are always cold, even at that season when the sun shines with intense heat during the day.

"I have still one room with a roof over it," said Daniel Girardet; "and, though it will make close quarters, we cannot do better, I think, than all gather in there for the night; for there is neither time to construct other shelter, nor material at hand to do it with."

This was quite true; and with thanks for his hospitality his invitation was accepted. They gathered together as one family, shared with each other their scanty supply of provisions, united in prayer and praise, and lay down to sleep,—some on the bare floor, others on rude couches of leaves or straw.

Madalena's heart was sad, and full of gloomy forebodings, as, lying down on one of these last, which Hubert's loving hands had prepared for her and his mother, she folded her babes to her bosom and thought of their ruined home, their utter destitution, and their implacable, bloodthirsty, and powerful foes. "Yet," she murmured, "'I will trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon my God;'" and then she fell asleep, with the Saviour's words resting sweetly in her mind,

"Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

The sun had long since disappeared, and the moon was now sending down a flood of silvery light over mountain and valley. In the shadow of the chestnut-trees in front of Hubert's cottage, and leaning with his back against one of them, a man stood with folded arms, and head bowed upon his breast, which ever and anon heaved with a heavy, deep-drawn sigh. It was Hubert himself, mourning in sadness over his ruined home, thinking with keen anguish of the seemingly utter impossibility of providing food, raiment, and shelter for the helpless, dependent ones dearer to him than life. For a time a feeling of bitterness and hatred toward the authors of these calamities—the destroyers of his home and all the fruits of his industry—the murderers of his kindred, arose in his heart; but he struggled and prayed against it.

"Give me the spirit of the Master, O my Father!" he cried, "the spirit of Him who prayed for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'"

"Amen!" said a deep, tremulous voice at his side. "Ah, Romano, it is no easy matter for poor human nature to follow the Master in that. Terrible has been the struggle in my breast this night, and scarcely yet have I obtained the victory. You, looking upon your ruined home, find it hard to forgive; but thank God, who has spared to you still your wife, your mother, and your babes."

"I do; I do," replied Hubert, with emotion. "And yours, Girardet?"

It was a moment ere Daniel Girardet could find voice

to speak: then, with trembling lips and faltering tongue, he said, "When Gastaldo's edict was published, I had a comfortable cottage, a dear aged parent, a beloved wife, and six sweet children. Now my home is in ruins; father, wife, and two of my babes have perished by fire and sword; and, worse than all, two have fallen alive into the hands of those who will bring them up in the idolatrous practices of Rome. Two are yet spared to me: God be thanked for that, and for the happy entrance into his rest of those whose lives have been taken; but, alas! alas for the others!—my beloved Henri, and my sweet Lucilla——"

He paused, overcome by emotion, and Hubert replied, in tones of the deepest sympathy, "'Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.' And the tenth article of the treaty provides that the prisoners on both sides, including women and children, shall be restored when claimed."

"Yes," replied the afflicted father; "but they have been so effectually concealed that I know not where they are, and therefore cannot claim them, in the insidious sense of the clause. Alas, Romano," he added, with a heavy sigh, "our enemies know well how to elude the terms of a treaty like that; and I begin already to perceive that the so-called Patent of Grace, under the mask of establishing our security, has left us more than ever at the mercy of our oppressors."

"I fear me it is so," said Hubert; "but God reigns, and in him will we put our trust."

"Yes," said the other, with deep emotion; "that is a blessed truth: 'tis all that keeps me from despair. 'If the Lord be for us, who can be against us?' And

he can save my babes, even as he saved Daniel in the lions' den, or the children in the fiery furnace."

It was as Daniel Girardet had said. The treaty which the earnest, emphatic remonstrances of Protestant Europe, perhaps joined to the successes of Gianavel and his band, had forced the duke to conclude with his much-abused Vaudois subjects, had been artfully drawn up in such a way that, while seemingly favorable to the poor persecuted folk, it in reality left them in a worse condition than before—more entirely in the power of those who hated them with bitter and unrelenting hatred. Nor was it long ere the Waldenses began to feel most sensibly its baneful effects. They were persecuted and oppressed in every way, and their miseries were very great. The conditions of the treaty were hard enough at the best; but they were not observed by the government. Some of the articles were evaded, and others strained to suit their own purposes. Many of the poor people were deprived of their patrimonies, or forced to make payments from which it had been promised that they should be exempted; also, their children were still stolen from them, and the prisoners taken during the war were not returned according to agreement. Articles ninth and tenth provided that "those who during the late troubles have abjured their religion, as they allege, under restraint, and desire to return to Protestantism, shall not, for so returning, be punished as relapsed persons," and that "the prisoners on both sides, including women and children, shall be restored when claimed;" but, as in the case of Daniel Girardet's little ones, care had been taken to remove the captured Vaudois children from place to place, and so to conceal them that their parents

knew not where they were, and could not, therefore, claim them, in the treacherous sense of the clause; and great care was also taken to remove, as far as possible beyond reach, all who had abjured.

The duke had promised to demolish the fortress of La Tour; but he merely threw down a small detached tower, and then enlarged and strengthened the fort, and added to its garrison—a band of fierce, bloodthirsty marauders, who made frequent sallies, plundering and murdering all they met, burning down houses, and committing every sort of excess, so that many of the poor people were forced to flee from their cottages to escape these outrages; seeing which, Count di Bagnolo, the Governor of La Tour, issued a proclamation forbidding any one to receive these unhappy creatures, under penalty of having his own property destroyed.

An extract from a letter written by the ministers and elders of the valleys to their brethren of Geneva, dated Pinaches, February, 1657—about a year and a half after the signing of the treaty—will give the reader some idea of the sad condition of the poor Waldenses at that period:

“Our people are in extreme necessities, the greatest part of our families being destitute of houses, moveables, cattel, or anything else whereby to subsist. If you did but know, sirs, the greatness of our miseries, you would certainly have compassion on us, and pitie our sad condition. God is now in good earnest chastising us for our sins and iniquities, to which wee most willinglie submitt, kissing the rod, and confessing that hee is still just and righteous.”

Our friends Hubert and Pierre, and their families, shared in the common lot. Hubert succeeded in making

his cottage tolerably habitable before the winter set in; but they suffered much for want of proper food and clothing, and their faith and patience were often sorely tried.

CHAPTER XIV.

“The cross our Master bore for us
For him we fain would bear;
But mortal strength to weakness turns,
And courage to despair.

“Then pity all our frailty, Lord;
Our failing strength renew;
And when thy sorrows visit us,
Oh, send thy patience too.”

PIERRE MASSON was a carpenter by trade, and, taking Louis as his apprentice, he sought employment in the town and adjacent villages; and when it was to be had, both worked diligently. But they often found themselves compelled to remain idle, or to work for little or nothing; as few of the Papists would employ “heretic workmen,” and most of the Waldenses were so utterly impoverished that they could procure neither materials with which to rebuild their ruined homes, nor money to pay for the necessary labor.

Two years had rolled slowly by since the signing of the treaty, when one bright summer morning Pierre and his little family gathered about their breakfast-table. It was a frugal and scanty meal: a few cakes made of ground chestnuts, and a pitcher of water,—that was all; and tears filled Aline’s eyes as she glanced

from one pale face to another, taking sad note of the famished look worn by each and all, from her husband down to the puny infant that lay on her breast—a little Pierre, who, two months before, had come to fill the aching void in their hearts made by the death of their darling Hugo.

“Cheer up, dear wife,” said Pierre, observing her emotion. “Remember the promises of our God and Father, ‘Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.’ ‘Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.’ He will provide food for us here, or take us to that better land where we shall eat of the tree of life.”

“But there may be much suffering first, Pierre,—ah, has there not been much already? and, though for myself I could bear it, it is a sore trial of faith and patience to see you and these dear children suffer,” she replied, while the tears coursed freely down her cheeks.

“It is sad indeed to see our dear ones enduring pain,” he answered, with emotion; “but He who sends the trial loves us far better than we love each other, and he doeth all things well. Let us remember his word, ‘What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.’ I will go and seek again for employment,” he added, rising from the table and reaching for his hat, “and perhaps it may please the Lord to enable me to find it, and to bring home what will supply our wants for another day.”

He paused for a moment beside his wife, for one tender glance at her and the little one, then hurried into the street without trusting himself to speak again; for the sight of their pale and wasted features, pinched with famine, had well-nigh unmanned him.

With a deep-drawn sigh, and a silent prayer for grace and strength to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible," he hastened on his way. From street to street and from house to house he passed, everywhere asking for work,—everywhere meeting with a refusal, oftentimes accompanied with abuse.

"Will you employ me, sir? My family are starving, and I have not the means to provide them with food," he said, addressing a wealthy Romanist who was standing in front of a half-finished building, surveying it with a dissatisfied air.

The man turned, and, measuring him with his eye, "I know you, Pierre Masson," he said; "I know you for an excellent workman, but an obstinate heretic; and, though I need good workmen, I would sooner let my house stand as it is until the beams rot and the roof falls in, than let you plane a board or drive in a nail—unless you will abjure your heresies."

"But think of my suffering wife and little ones," replied Pierre, entreatingly: "would you have them die of hunger, though I desire most earnestly to labor for their support, and can do your work as well as another?"

"'Tis no concern of mine," answered the man, indifferently; "but if you will go to mass you shall have work enough, and good wages to pay for it."

But Pierre shook his head, and turned away with a heavy sigh. On doing so he found himself face to face with a richly-dressed lady, who, while passing down the street, had paused to listen to the conversation between the two men. He recognized her instantly as the wife of a wealthy gentleman of the neighborhood, and a member of the Propaganda, very active and zeal-

ous in her efforts to make converts from among the Vaudois.

"Surely, my good man," she said, addressing Pierre, with one of her sweetest smiles, "you cannot be so unfeeling, so terribly cruel and hard-hearted, as to let your wife and children suffer the gnawings of hunger, and perhaps perish with famine, before your very eyes, rather than give way in such a trifle as merely attending mass? Only say that you will go, and my friend here will supply you with work, and I will myself go to your house and see that your family want for neither food nor clothing until such time as your wages will supply them with both."

"Madame," said Pierre, and his tone was as firm and calm as it was respectful, though his pale face grew still paler, and a tear trembled in his eye, "I cannot deny my Lord. If it please him, he will provide us with food; and if not, he will give us strength to bear our sufferings, and take us to himself at last."

"It is but a trifling concession we ask," she said; "and I cannot believe you love your wife and little ones if you continue obstinate in your refusal to make it."

"They are dear to me as my own soul," he answered, with a quivering lip; "but Christ is dearer still; and it is no trifling concession you require as the price of relief to them, but the great sin of giving to the creature that worship and honor which are due to the Creator alone."

"Ah, what heresy! what shocking heresy you are talking!" she cried, lifting her hands with a gesture of horror. "Such words spoken against the holy sacrifice

of the mass should send you to the stake!" And she hurried away, as if fearful of contamination.

"I have indeed spoken bold words, and may ere long be called upon to seal them with my blood," thought Pierre, with a shudder, as he glanced after her retreating form, then moved slowly on in the opposite direction.

Aline had finished her morning round of duties connected with the care of her household, and now, seated beside the cradle of her sleeping infant, was mending an old and well-worn garment, while at the same time she assisted Philip to spell out a few verses in the family Bible, which lay on the table beside her.

"Hark, Philip!" she exclaimed, in an undertone: "I hear a step; and it is neither that of your uncle nor Louis. Hide the book quickly, my child. Here, let us place it in the foot of the cradle, and cover it with the quilt."

Scarcely had they done so, when there was a light tap on the door, instantly followed by the entrance of the same richly-dressed lady who a short time before had been urging Pierre, by the strongest motive she could bring to bear upon him—his love for his wife and little ones—to abjure his faith; now come to try her arts and blandishments upon the gentle and naturally timid and yielding Aline, to induce her to take the same wrong way of saving those dear to her from suffering.

"Good-morning, my good woman; I have been walking some distance, and must ask the privilege of resting here for a few moments," she said, glancing about her with an expression of mingled curiosity and contempt; for the room, though beautifully neat and

clean, was small, and contained no furniture save a bed of straw in one corner, the cradle in which the babe lay sleeping, a table, and a few stools and benches, all rudely fashioned by Pierre and Louis out of such coarse material as they could command.

"You are welcome, madame. Pray be seated," replied Aline, as, with gentle dignity and self-possession, she stepped forward and placed a stool for her visitor, then quietly resumed her own seat and took up her babe, which woke at that moment with a little wailing cry.

"That child looks puny and more than half starved. Have you sufficient nourishment for it?" asked the intruder.

Aline shook her head. She could not command her voice to speak, and the silent tears dropped down one by one upon her baby's face, as she clasped it tenderly to her bosom.

"It is because you lack nourishing food yourself," said the Propagandist, looking searchingly into her pale, patient face, with its hollow cheeks and sunken eyes. "If you care not for the gnawings of hunger yourself, can you bear to see your child wasting away before your very eyes? and that little fellow, so pale and weak, and looking as if he could eat his very fingers to stop the terrible gnawing pain in his stomach?" And she pointed to Philip, who raised his sad eyes, with a wistful, inquiring look, to the face of his young aunt.

"God knows I would feed them if I could!" murmured Aline, amid her choking sobs; and, passing her arm round Philip, she drew him to her side and pressed her quivering lips to his cheek.

"You can," said the lady, modulating her voice to its most winning and persuasive tone: "you have but to abjure your heresy,—but to promise to attend mass,—and I pledge myself to see you and your husband and children provided with everything necessary for your comfort."

"Madame," replied Aline, "my Lord has said, 'He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it.' How could I deny Him that bought me with his own blood? and would it not be worse than folly to purchase a few days of ease and comfort here by the loss of heaven and the enduring of the pains of hell forever?"

"It is from hell I would save you," returned the lady; "for, unless you abjure your heresy, that will inevitably be your portion. And look what you and your children are suffering now; your husband, too. I met him as I came here, and I saw the marks of famine in his face—the deadly pallor, and the pinched, worn features. Do you indeed love him? and can you bear to see him suffer so?"

It was a moment ere Aline could speak; then, with a convulsive sob, she said, "I love him better than life; but I love my Saviour better still; and I cannot deny him, lest in that last great day he also should deny me. And I know, madame," she added, in a calmer tone, a look of holy joy shining in her eyes, "that he is all-powerful and all-wise, and loves us both far better than we love each other, and will suffer

no real harm to befall us—nothing but what shall be for his honor and glory and our eternal good.”

“I have one more argument to bring forward,” said the tempter. “I have kept it to the last, hoping it would not be necessary, but that your own good sense would be sufficient to lead you to act the part of wisdom in accepting my offers. Your husband has abjured, and promised to go to mass. What say you now? Will you not go with him?”

“Madame, I cannot believe it. I know my husband too well. I know too well the arm on which he leans—the almighty arm of Him who has said, ‘I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness;’ and who ‘will not suffer his people to be tempted above that they are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it,’” replied Aline, lifting her head, and speaking in a calm, firm voice that at the last rose almost to a tone of triumph.

“Obstinate heretic! ungrateful creature! I leave you to your own folly!” was the angry rejoinder of the Propagandist, as she hastily rose to her feet, her face distorted with passion. “I would have saved you; but you are determined to destroy yourself, and to drag down to the same destruction those who ought to be very dear to you. Know now that, for your soul’s sake, I told you what was false; and that your husband, so far from abjuring, is a heretic, no less obstinate than yourself, and has this day spoken such words of blasphemy against the holy sacrifice of the mass as ought to send him to the stake, and will, I doubt not.”

She was sweeping angrily from the room, but paused

suddenly ere she reached the door, and, turning, held out her hand to Philip, saying, with a winning smile. "Come, my little man; will you not go with me? I will give you plenty to eat, beautiful clothes to wear, toys and sweetmeats in abundance, and you shall ride every day in a fine coach, and perhaps have a little pony of your own."

Philip's eyes sparkled at the thought of abundance of food, and for a single instant he seemed to hesitate; then, resolutely drawing back, he answered in a firm tone, surprising in one so young. "No, madame," he said; "I cannot go with you: you would take me to mass, and bid me worship the Virgin and the saints; and the Bible tells me, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve.' And Uncle Pierre has read to me where it tells how Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

The look he received in reply made the child tremble and cling to his aunt, and, as the unwelcome guest vanished, closing the door behind her with an angry slam, they fell upon their knees, trembling and weeping.

"O Lord! be not far from us, for trouble is near!" cried Aline, in tones of keenest anguish. "Lord, help us! Lord, save us! Lord Jesus, give thy servants grace according to their day!"

It was now near noon; and, oh, with what an anxious throbbing heart did Aline listen to every footfall in the street, waiting, watching, and longing for her husband's return, and fearing that he might never come again!

But at last he entered, pale, sad, and weary.

"I have come back as I went,—empty-handed, my

little wife," he said, sorrowfully, as he sat down by her side. "It has pleased the Lord to try our faith and patience still further; but, though he slay us, let us still trust in him."

"Ah, my husband, my heart is filled with joy and thankfulness that I am permitted to behold your face once more," she said, wiping away a tear. "We have had a visitor in your absence, and her words filled me with terror and dismay."

She then gave him an account of her interview with the Propagandist, and asked if it were indeed true that she had met him, and that he had spoken against the mass.

"Too true, my Aline," he said; "for though it is but God's truth I have spoken, and I cannot repent of bearing witness to that, yet I much fear me I shall one day be called to seal it with my blood."

Aline clung to him with bitter weeping at these words.

"Oh, my husband! my husband! how can I give thee up?" she cried. "Thou art all the world to me! Will the Lord require such a sacrifice? Will he give me strength to bear it?"

"Yes, my beloved. What says his own word? 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God. I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.'" And kneeling, with his arm about his weeping wife, he prayed fervently—with strong crying and tears—that to them these promises might be fulfilled, grace and strength being given them according to their day, that so they might be enabled to do and suffer all God's holy will.

As they rose from their knees, Louis came in, bringing a scanty supply of food, the gift of a neighbor not quite so impoverished as themselves. It was not enough to satisfy their appetites; but it gave partial relief to the pangs of hunger, and their hearts swelled with joy, and gratitude to God, who had disposed this kind friend to help them in this sore extremity by sharing with them his own scanty pittance.

Refreshed by this seasonable supply of food and an hour's rest, Pierre again sallied forth in quest of employment, but returned at night with the same sad story of want of success, and, having read a portion of the word and united in prayer to God, they retired supperless to bed.

Morning came, and once more—alas! for the last time—Pierre gathered his little family about him, read to them from the word of God, exhorted them to faith, patience, and submission, and, kneeling, returned thanks for their spared lives and health, and all other blessings, temporal and spiritual, which were still continued to them, and implored a supply of necessary food, and grace and strength for whatever might be before them.

Then with a tender farewell to his wife and a father's blessing bestowed upon the little ones, as though he felt he might never see them again, he once more set out in search of work. Louis went with him at starting; but ere long they parted, and took different roads. At noon, Louis returned with a few wild berries he had gathered, but found his uncle still absent. The day wore on, the sun set, and night spread her starry mantle over the valley, and still he came not. Long *Adieu*

watched and waited for him, and when at length she sought her couch, it was but to lie awake for hours—now straining her ear to catch the sound of his coming footsteps, now starting at an imaginary cry of distress, and shuddering to think where he might be and what he might be suffering; and when at last she slept, her dreams were of dungeons and tortures, of midnight assassins and of martyrs at the stake, and she woke, trembling with horror and fear, woke, alas! to the conviction that her dream might soon become a dread reality.

Her husband had not yet returned; and but too well she remembered the threat of the Propagandist and the defenseless condition of all who professed the Vaudois faith. Another day passed, and yet another, and she sent Louis to Hubert and Madalena, with tidings of his uncle's disappearance. They came to her at once, bringing a share of their own scanty supply of provisions, sustaining her drooping spirits by their loving sympathy and their prayers, and speaking words of comfort and hope based upon the promises of God's holy word.

A diligent search for the missing husband and father was also immediately set on foot by his brethren in the faith, though with small hope of success; and, as they feared, it proved in vain. They could trace him to a neighboring village, and a little beyond, where the road entered a deep and dark ravine, but no farther. He had been seen to enter, but never to leave, that ravine; nor was his body to be found there; and the conclusion was almost inevitable that he had fallen a victim to Popish hatred and intolerance, and already his friends mourned him as dead.

Hubert and Madalena would have persuaded Aline to bring her children with her and share their humble abode ; but she said, " Not yet," for she still clung, with the tenacity of undying affection, to the hope of her husband's return. He was her all of earthly good, and she could not give him up.

But week after week dragged slowly along, and no tidings came, while day by day the terrible suspense and dread and the pinching poverty and toil told upon Aline's frame till she grew but the very shadow of her former self. Madalena was with her whenever she could be spared from her own family, and Louis and Philip were most tenderly attentive—the former exerting himself to the utmost to provide for the daily recurring wants of the family, and often spending hours in reading to his aunt from the Bible ; its precious promises seeming to be her only support and consolation in the midst of her sore affliction.

Three weeks had thus passed, and hope had almost died in Aline's breast, when one morning she was startled by the sudden entrance of her whom she had every reason to believe the instigator of the assassination or abduction of her husband. As richly dressed, and as bright and joyous in her appearance, as on her former visit, she stood before the bereaved wife and mockingly asked, " Where is your husband ?"

" Ah, madame, if you know," cried Aline, trembling between hope and fear, " I beseech you to tell me, for the love of heaven !"

" Did I not warn you of the consequences if you continued obstinate in your heresy ?" replied her tormentor, with triumphant malignity. " Your husband lies now in a dungeon of the Abbey of Pignerol ; nor

will he ever leave it except for the torture-chamber or the stake."

With a deep groan of unutterable anguish, Aline sank back insensible. When she recovered consciousness, she found herself lying upon the floor, while the Propagandist was bending over her, sprinkling cold water in her face.

"There!" she said, with a touch of compassion in her voice, as, with a long-drawn sigh, her poor victim opened her eyes; "the case is perhaps not yet quite hopeless; only abjure your heresy, and I will use all my influence to get your husband set at liberty."

But Aline could not speak. She only clasped her wasted hands together, and lifted her sad, beseeching eyes to heaven, while her lips moved feebly, as if in prayer.

The lady regarded her for a moment in silence, then turned about and walked out of the house, leaving the heart-broken woman alone with her bitter sorrow, her puny, half-starved infant wailing in its cradle, and little Philip sitting sobbing on the floor by her side.

For the first time since its birth, the wail of her child fell unheeded on Aline's ear. She seemed to hear neither that nor the sound of Philip's sobs, and he—poor little fellow!—presently dried his eyes, and, going to the cradle, tried to still the cries of the infant; but, finding all his efforts vain, he went to his aunt, and, softly touching her hand, "Aunt Aline," he said, "little Pierre will cry; I cannot soothe him."

His words seemed to rouse her, and, raising herself to a sitting posture, she mechanically took up her babe and soothed it to rest on her bosom, Philip standing by her side and watching her with wistful, tear-

dimmed eyes, longing to comfort her, but not knowing how to do it. He had heard and understood enough of what the Propagandist said, to know that something terrible had befallen his uncle, though he had no very clear idea what it was; but he saw that his aunt was in sore affliction; for though he wondered greatly that her eyes were dry, and no traces of tears visible on her cheeks, yet there was such anguish written on every line of her still, white face, as even he, young as he was, could not fail to read; and he did not venture to ask a single question, or to speak at all, until she first broke the silence.

"Philip," she said, at last, in a strangely altered and hollow voice, "I must go to him—to your uncle. I must set off at once, and carry little Pierre with me. And you, Philip—will you stay here till Louis comes, and then tell him I bade you both go to Casella, to Hubert and Madalena?"

"I will, Aunt Aline," replied the little boy; and then he asked, half hesitatingly, "and will you soon come home again, and bring Uncle Pierre with you?"

"If the will of the Lord be so," she answered, very low, and with a quivering lip; and, rising, she went about, gathering together a few small articles such as she deemed most necessary for the comfort of her husband and child. These she made into a small bundle, which she hung upon her arm, and, taking a tender leave of Philip, she set out upon her sad pilgrimage, with her babe clasped closely to her breast. The morning was already far advanced when she started, and as she hastened on, trembling with weakness, grief, and anxiety, a scorching sun beat pitilessly upon her unprotected head, and her tender feet, only half covered by

nearly worn-out shoes, were bruised and wounded on the rough, stony roads. But she heeded not these discomforts of the way, one agonizing thought—that her husband was lying in a dungeon, in prospect of torture and the stake—so filling her mind that she seemed scarcely conscious of anything else. It was a long and weary road to travel; and, weak and exhausted as she was by mental and physical suffering, nothing but the energy of love and despair could have carried her through. The sun had already set as she passed through the gates of the town, and, almost fainting with weakness and fatigue, sank down upon the door-step of a humble dwelling near by.

“*Santissima!* what a wretched-looking creature is that!” exclaimed a young girl, who was standing by the window. “Look, mother, at that woman who has fallen upon our door-step; she has a face as pale as death.”

“She is half famished, I think, and the infant too,” said the mother, looking out. “How feebly it cries! Run, Savona, and fetch a bit of bread, and the bowl of milk left from our supper. To feed such hungry wretches will be a good work, for which the saints will reward us.”

Touched with pity for the forlorn strangers, the girl hastened to obey her mother’s behest, and the next moment was at Aline’s side, with the bowl of milk in one hand, and a large slice of bread in the other.

“Here is something to refresh you, my good woman,” she said, in a kindly tone, while her mother, who had followed her, added, “The milk will be good for both yourself and your little one.”

Aline thanked them only with a grateful look, for

she was almost past speaking, and, taking the bowl from the girl, with a trembling hand, she held it to her baby's lips and let it drink its fill, then eagerly swallowed the rest herself; but she ate only a small portion of the bread, hiding the rest in her bosom for one dearer than herself, who might be perishing with hunger.

"You have walked a long way, poor thing?" said Savona's mother, inquiringly, as she glanced at the worn shoes and bleeding feet.

"From La Tour," Aline replied; and then, rising, she asked the way to the abbey.

The woman directed her, and, with a few low-murmured words of thanks, Aline turned, and went on her way.

"Santissima! she is doubtless one of the heretic Vaudois, whose husband lies in the dungeons of the abbey," exclaimed the woman, looking after her, as with slow and tottering step she moved on down the street; "and I have fed her, and perhaps endangered my soul by so doing! I will have to do penance for this. Ah, my kind heart is always getting me into trouble." And she crossed herself rapidly several times, and muttered a prayer to the Virgin and the saints, as she went in and shut the door.

Daylight had quite faded from the streets, and the moon had risen, ere Aline reached her destination. It was with great fear and trembling that she drew near the entrance to the monastery, and her knock was very low and timid; but it was answered almost instantly by the lay brother who filled the office of porter to the establishment, and who, starting with surprise at see-

ing a woman standing before him, asked, in a rough, harsh voice, what she wanted.

"To see my husband, Pierre Masson, who, I am told, lies in a dungeon here," replied Aline, trembling, and almost sinking to the ground with weakness and affright. "Oh, sir," she cried, clasping her thin hands together, and raising her hollow, pleading eyes to his face, "as you hope for God's mercy to your soul in that last great day, have pity upon me, and let me see my husband."

She was a pitiful sight to behold, poor, grief-stricken young mother, as she stood trembling there, with her pale, sleeping infant on her bosom; and as the man looked upon her wan, emaciated features, plainly visible in the moonlight, an emotion of compassion stirred in his breast, hardened as he was to the sight of human suffering. But she was young, and lovely still, in spite of the ravages of grief and famine, and he thought he saw in her some resemblance to a sister who had once been very dear to him.

"Woman," he said, stepping nearer to her, and speaking in a much lower and gentler tone than before, "this is no place for such as you. You had better fly while there is yet time; for, believe me, if you linger here, death and destruction are before you."

"You mean kindly, and I thank you," she replied. "But, oh, sir, it is not for my own safety I am concerned. I must see my husband! Do, oh do, I beseech you, take me to him!"

"Come in, then, if it must be so; and I'll see what can be done," he said, still speaking in a very low tone. "It would be more than my life's worth to let you into the dungeons without the permission of my supe

riors ; but I'll try if that can be obtained." And, pushing open, as he spoke, the door of a little room close to the entrance, and whence he himself had just issued, and pointing to a rude stone bench, he bade her sit down there and await his return. Then, taking up a lamp that stood on a table, he went out, and closed the door behind him, leaving her alone, and with no light but that afforded by the moonbeams struggling in through a narrow, iron-barred window in the thick stone wall.

Around a marble table in the center of a large and lofty room, lighted by gothic windows and adorned with an exquisitely wrought crucifix of Carrara marble, and with many fine paintings, representing scenes in the lives of Popish saints, sat three men—the prior of the monastery, and two officers of the Inquisition at Rome. The table was covered with papers which they seemed to be examining, while, at the same time, they conversed in subdued tones.

A step was heard coming down the passage without, and a knock at the door followed. The Inquisitors raised their heads and looked inquiringly at the prior, who, saying, "It is only Brother Bernardo," bade him come in ; and the old porter entered, and, with a profound obeisance, drew near the table.

"How now, good brother?" said his superior ; "what important errand brings you here at this unseasonable hour?"

"I beg pardon for my untimely intrusion, reverend father," replied Bernardo ; "but there is a Vaudois woman below, craving admission to the cell of her husband, Pierre Masson, that vile heretic who was brought in some three weeks since and subjected to

the torture to-day. Is it your pleasure to grant her request?"

"As obstinate a heretic as it was ever our lot to bring under the gentle discipline of the church," remarked the prior, with a frown. "Neither torture nor the fear of the stake can bring him to repentance."

"Perhaps, reverend father," said Bernardo, "a sight of his wife and child may revive his love of life, and lead him to abjure his heresies for their sake, if not for his own."

"A wise suggestion, good brother," said the prior, with a grim smile. "What say you, my lords?" he asked, turning to his companions.

"That she may as well be admitted," replied the elder of the two. "No harm to the cause can come of it, since it merely gives us two prisoners instead of one; and it may be," he added, crossing himself devoutly, "that, through the blessing of the merciful mother of God, the sight of her husband in his present condition will lead her to abjure her heresies and to persuade him to do the same."

"You may, then, admit the woman, Bernardo," said the prior; "and fail not to suggest to her the means by which she may save her husband and herself from torture and death; for our Holy Mother Church is ever merciful, and would reclaim, rather than destroy, these miserable heretics." And with these words, and a wave of the hand, he dismissed him.*

Meantime, Aline, in her dreary solitude, was lifting up her heart in fervent prayer to God; and in answer to her petitions a strange calmness of spirit, a wonder

* See Appendix, Note C.

ful elevation of soul, had been granted to her. She was now within the walls of that gloomy prison where the dreaded Inquisition often held its tribunal; a place she had never before been able to think of without a shudder of horror and fear; but now she was calm and composed. She felt that she had ventured into the very jaws of the tiger; but she knew that He who was with the children in the fiery furnace and with Daniel in the lions' den was with her here, and as able to protect and save as in those days of old; and never before had his presence been so real to her; never before had she been so sweetly conscious of the everlasting arms underneath and around her.

She doubted not that torture and death awaited her beloved husband; she hardly hoped to escape them herself; but she knew that the Lord would give grace and glory; and, forgetting all personal fear, she only prayed that she might be permitted to sustain and comfort him in his hour of trial.

"I have got permission to grant your request," said the porter, returning. "The reverend father was in a merciful mood to-night." And, lighting a lantern, he bade her follow him, which she did through many long, gloomy passages, and down more than one flight of narrow winding stairs, into a region of darkness, humidity, and filth, whence arose a stench so intolerable that she grew sick and faint, and gasped for breath; but still her guide led her on, passing many iron-barred doors set in the solid masonry, until, at length, pausing before one, he selected a key from a huge bunch that hung suspended from his girdle. Then, turning to her and speaking in a low tone close to her ear, "Before we enter," he said, "let me warn you that you will

find your husband suffering much ; but his wounds are only such as may be healed ; and if you would restore yourself and him to liberty—if you would save your lives—you must abjure your heresies and induce him to do the same ; otherwise, be assured, torture and death await you both.”

So saying, he applied the key to the lock, without waiting for a reply. It turned with a harsh, grating sound ; the heavy door swung slowly back on its hinges, and they entered.

It was a horrible den—damp, dark, filthy ; moisture trickling down the stone walls, green with slime ; the floor of loose bricks set in mud, which at every step oozed up through the cracks between.

The darkness was so intense that at first Aline could see nothing ; but Bernardo guided her to one corner, and, turning the light so that it fell full upon it, she there beheld a human figure, clothed in rags and stretched upon a pallet of rotten straw ; a pale, emaciated, bruised, and broken form, that lifted its large, hollow eyes to her face with a look of patient suffering, fit to melt a heart of stone.

“ My Aline ! my beloved wife ! ” he exclaimed, with a start and a suppressed cry of anguish, as the movement wrenched his torn muscles and broken bones.

“ Ah, Pierre, my husband ! can it be that I find you thus ? ” she cried, with a bitter wail, as she sank on her knees by his side, and covered his face with her kisses and tears.

“ This,” said Bernardo, in a cold, stern tone, “ is the fruit of heresy. See to it that by timely repentance you escape worse sufferings here and eternal torments hereafter.”

So saying, he lighted an iron lamp that hung from the ceiling, went out, and left them alone.

For some moments they wept together in silence; then Aline, checking her sobs, and tenderly wiping the cold dew of suffering from her husband's brow, said, "Ah, my Pierre, 'unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;' and you have been enabled to witness a good profession: is it not so, my beloved?"

"Yes, Aline," he said, "the Lord was with me, and did not suffer me to be tempted above that I was able. But, oh, my dear wife, why have you come here? It is almost like a little heaven upon earth to behold you; yet I would have you fly this instant—if it be not, alas! already too late—lest you too become a victim to their proselyting zeal."

"Nay, my husband, command me not to leave you," she entreated; "but, so long as I am permitted, let me stay by your side to comfort you and do what I can to relieve your pains."

"The Lord bless and reward you for your devotion to me, my dear wife!" he said, with deep emotion. "Oh, Aline, my beloved one! I long to clasp you in my arms; but I cannot. I shall never be able to do so again; these mangled limbs are powerless—they refuse to obey my will. And our dear babe—hold him to me, that I may kiss him once more and give him a father's blessing. I am almost done with earth; but may the Lord spare you to train him up for his service! I charge you, Aline, to bring him up in the fear of God, and teach him to walk in his ways and dread nothing so much as sin."

She held the sleeping babe to him, that he might

press his lips to its soft cheek, promising, as she did so, that, if her life and its were spared, she would indeed try to train it up for God. Then, laying it by his side, she smoothed the straw of his wretched pallet, lifting the wounded limbs with tender, loving hands, and placing them more comfortably upon it; and, sitting down beside him, she fed him with the bread she had brought, and, laying her cool hand on his heated brow, she softly repeated such words as these: "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy;" until at length, worn out with pain, and lulled to rest by the precious, comforting words and the loved voice, he fell asleep

CHAPTER XV.

"Poor wife! poor wife! *his* crown is won,
But sore bereaved art *thou*!
Dear Saviour, help the helpless one—
Thou art her husband now."

MRS. A. STUART MONTEITH

"Like the lily,
That once was mistress of the field, and flourished,
I'll hang my head and perish."

SHAKESPEARE: *Henry VIII.*

DAY and night were alike in that gloomy cell where Pierre Masson was lying, for no glad ray of heaven's sunlight could ever enter it, and its thick walls were never penetrated by any sound from the busy world without: it was all one long night of utter silence and of darkness that might be felt. Their food, which was brought to them at distant intervals and silently thrust in through a small opening in the door, made for the purpose, consisted of a scanty supply of bread, so bad that only excessive hunger could have made it possible for any one to eat it, and a small allowance of water, as impure and unwholesome as that which flows through the gutters in our streets.

The lamp continued to burn, giving a dim light, until the supply of oil was exhausted, when it went out, and they had no longer even the melancholy pleasure of looking upon each other's faces; but they could still converse in low tones, and they talked much of Him

who had died to redeem them, and of that better land where, after the toils and sufferings of this mortal life should be over, they hoped to meet never to part again, and to dwell "forever with the Lord;" and often, as they thus conversed, heaven seemed very near, and even amid all the horrors of that loathsome prison-cell, and with torture and a violent death in very near and certain prospect, the sense of their Saviour's presence and his love to them filled their hearts with joy and peace in believing.

They knew not how long they had been together; but it could not have been less than several weeks, and Pierre's limbs had so far recovered from the effects of the torture that he was now able, with his wife's assistance, to raise himself to a sitting posture, and, while she supported him with one arm, he could clasp her other hand in his. It was the second or third time that she had helped him thus to relieve the weariness of constant confinement to that wretched couch.

"Alas, my husband, that you should thus languish in this loathsome cell!" she said, with a deep-drawn sigh, as she passed her arm around him, and he leaned his head upon her shoulder. "Would that I could give you light and air and nourishing food! for you are very weak."

"That is but a cause for thankfulness, dear wife, since I may therefore hope the sooner to be released from both this cell and this prison-house of clay," he answered, in a patient, uncomplaining tone; "and, oh, what a mercy that I am out of hell! and that these persecutors can only kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do! Ah, how short will seem the time of suffering here when compared with the

ages of eternal bliss in the presence of our Lord ! And what right have I to murmur or complain ? for though I am innocent of any crime against my fellow-men, yet I am, in the sight of God, a miserable sinner, deserving of everlasting punishment ; and yet, blessed be his holy name ! he ‘has redeemed me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me,’ and has given me eternal life, and I shall never perish.”

“No ; for none is able to pluck you out of his hand,” she said ; “and, whatever we may be called to endure ere he takes us to himself, we know that we shall not suffer one unneeded pang—one more than shall be for his honor and glory and our eternal good ; ‘for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.’”

“‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,’” repeated Pierre.

“But, ah, my beloved, when I think of what is before you, and of all you are suffering now, the cross seems very heavy,” murmured Aline, mournfully. “Oh, what but His promise to be with his people always—to help, to strengthen, to uphold them—to give grace and glory—what but that could keep a frail worm of the dust from sinking beneath this heavy load ?”

“He is faithful to his promises,” said Pierre. “Let us trust him fully, and he will enable us to glorify him, even in the fires.” And, making a feeble effort to clasp his wasted hands together, he poured out an earnest prayer for grace and strength to overcome the fear of man and endure to the end.

Scarcely had the last words left his lips, when a

grating sound told them that the key was turning in the lock of their cell-door. It swung open, and Bernardo entered, bearing a torch, whose sudden glare dazzled their eyes. Nor did he come alone; and Aline almost shrieked with terror as she caught sight of the two horrible figures who accompanied him,—two men clothed in long black robes, and their heads and faces covered with a cowl of the same dismal hue, with holes for the eyes, nose, and mouth.

They passed swiftly and noiselessly across the floor, and, raising Pierre in their arms, bore him away, without speaking a word; while Aline, fearing nothing so much as separation from her husband, started to her feet, and, hastily snatching her babe from the straw where it lay sleeping, followed quickly after, her heart sending up agonized petitions for him who was so dear to her, that, if possible, some way of escape might be opened, or, if that could not be, that God would be with him in the dreadful scenes through which he was about to pass, strengthening him to endure to the end, and that, if consistent with His holy will, his sufferings might be short.

Swiftly those horrible figures glided onward, bearing their silent and unresisting victim, through various windings and turnings, Aline following, and never losing sight of them, though many times her foot slipped on the slimy stones and she was near falling.

At length they entered a large subterranean chamber, through whose thick, humid atmosphere the red light of torches gleamed, showing walls of solid rock, glistening with moisture and hung with a variety of instruments of torture. A rack stood on one side, and in a far corner gleamed a pan of burning coals. Here

sat the prior and the two Inquisitors, and near them a notary, with pen, ink, and paper on a little table before him.

Pierre's conductors set him upon his feet, directly in front of the Inquisitors, supporting him on each side, for he was utterly unable to stand alone ; and while Aline stood at a little distance, shuddering with fear and horror as her eye glanced from one terrible feature of the scene to another, the principal Inquisitor thus addressed the poor victim, in honeyed accents: "My son, we hope that our prayers for your conversion have at length been granted, that you have been led to see the error of your ways, and are now prepared to abjure your vile heresies and become reconciled to the church ; that thus your soul may be snatched from the devil, who already had you in his grasp, and saved from hell, into which you had well-nigh fallen."

"I have long been reconciled to the church, my lord," replied Pierre, in calm though feeble tones.

"Unhappy slave of the devil," said the Inquisitor, "that cannot be; for the crime of which you are guilty is no less than the damnable one of speaking against the holy sacrifice of the mass ; a crime for which even a horrible death cannot atone, and which is of itself sufficient to sink your soul to perdition unless you repent. Will you now retract, confess your sin, and abjure your heresy?"

"My lord," said Pierre, "I cannot retract what I believe to be God's truth, nor consent to give to the creature that worship and honor which are due to the Creator alone!"

"Horrible blasphemy!" muttered the prior, crossing himself vehemently several times.

"Unhappy man, obstinate heretic, he will have it so!" exclaimed the Inquisitor, with a deep-drawn sigh and sad, disconsolate air, at the same time making a sign to the tormentors, who instantly seized Pierre and stretched him upon the rack.

With a wild cry of unspeakable anguish, Aline threw herself at the feet of the Inquisitors and pleaded for mercy for her husband. "He is innocent of any crime," she said. "Will you shed innocent blood? Ah, my lords, have pity, and spare him to me and to this dear babe! Show mercy to him, as you hope to have it shown to you in the last great day."

But as well might she have spoken to the rocky walls that encompassed this horrible place.

"Abjure your heresy, and persuade him to do the same, and he shall go free," replied the Inquisitor, in an icy tone; "but otherwise justice must take its course." And, with a heart-rending moan, Aline staggered to her feet, and tottered feebly to her husband's side.

But I will not harrow the feelings of my reader with a description of the horrible tortures of the Inquisition. Enough to say that to the gentle, timid, loving Aline, who had feared that she could never endure the sight of suffering borne by those so dear to her, was fulfilled the promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," and she was enabled to stand by through all that dreadful scene, encouraging the martyr with the words of the Master, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

And he was faithful. The agony was very great, but the Lord enabled him to bear it, and only words of

prayer escaped his lips, until at length exhausted nature gave way, and he became insensible.

Then, as the tormentors loosened the cords and raised the body, causing a gush of blood from the mouth and nostrils, Aline again turned to the Inquisitors.

"My lords! my lords!" she cried, "have you no mercy? are your hearts of stone?"

"Abjure your heresy, if you would save him," was the cold reply.

"I cannot deny my Lord," she said; and, as the poor victim, heaving a deep sigh, opened his eyes, a sign was again given to the tormentors, and he was subjected to the torture by fire, having already endured that by water.

"O God, have mercy, for the love of Jesus!" he cried, in his agony.

"Implore the Virgin," said the Inquisitors.

"There is but one mediator, even Jesus," replied the sufferer. "O God, have mercy, for his dear sake!"

"Beloved," said Aline, drawing near, and wiping the cold drops of agony from his brow, "you have thus far witnessed a good profession. Oh, be faithful to the end, which cannot now be far distant; remember how He bled and died for you; remember His own words, 'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.'"

"Yes, my beloved wife," gasped the poor sufferer, "the love of Christ makes even this agony endurable. May he bless and keep you until we meet above,—

you, and our child. Father, forgive them! Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

A groan of unutterable agony, a convulsive shudder, and all was over; the head fell back, and the features settled into the still majesty of death.

"Thank God, thou art at rest at last, my Pierre!" burst from Aline's pale, quivering lips, and, stooping, she pressed a kiss upon his brow; then, stretching out her hand to the Inquisitors, "My lords," she said, "may God forgive you, as I do!" And, turning, she staggered from the room, following the tormentors, two of whom had already raised the body of her husband in their arms and were carrying it away.

"Shall we suffer her to escape, my lord?" asked the under-Inquisitor, looking at his colleague. "Shall we not order her detention?"

"Nay, let her go for the present; we have work enough before us," was the reply, as another haggard, emaciated creature was brought in and placed before them. "Nor is she likely to go far," he added, exchanging an evil smile with the prior.

The men who bore the dead body of the martyred Pierre glided rapidly and noiselessly onward, and were quickly lost to the view of the heart-broken wife, amid the dark and gloomy windings of the prison.

Feebly she tottered forward, feeling her way by the slimy walls, gasping for breath in the thick, humid air, slipping and falling, and staggering to her feet again, all the time straining her feebly wailing infant with a convulsive clasp to her breast. All was darkness and silence about her, and she knew not whither her steps were tending—whether she was nearing the outer air or going deeper into the bowels of the earth; and, over-

come with fear, horror, and despair, nothing but love for her child, and the desire to save it, kept her from sinking utterly. A silent but agonized cry for help went up from her crushed and bleeding heart, and entered into the ear of Him who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." The next instant she again stumbled and fell, and, throwing out her hand, found that she was on the brink of some pit, chasm, or precipice—she knew not what, for no ray of light assisted her vision—and, recoiling in terror, she once more called upon God for help and deliverance.

It was at hand. Something seemed to glide toward her in the thick darkness; she felt a slight touch on her shoulder, and the voice of the old porter, Bernardo, whispered close to her ear, "Beware! destruction lies in your path. You are on the very edge of an almost bottomless abyss. See!" And, opening a dark-lantern, he disclosed the yawning gulf at their feet.

Aline looked down, and drew back shuddering. It was a deep pit sunk in the floor of the subterranean passage—whether natural or artificial, she could not tell—but a horrible trap for the unwary feet of passers-by; the sides near the mouth rough and jagged with points of rock, and all below the blackness of darkness. There was a trap-door, but it had been left open. And now she remembered a sound that had reached her ear some moments before, as of a sullen plunge of some heavy body falling to a great depth.

"It was in there they threw *him*," whispered Bernardo, again placing his lips close to her ear; "and they think you are with him now. But come, follow me, and I will lead you out, when you must flee to your mount

ains and hide; for should it ever become known to them that you have escaped, neither your life nor mine would be safe for a single day: nor would death be the worst that would befall us. But hide yourself, and they will be sure that you have fallen in here, and never suspect me of assisting you to escape."

He shut down the trap-door, closed his lantern, and, taking her by the hand, "Come," he said; "we have no time to lose. Thank Heaven that your babe has ceased its cries; they would have betrayed us." And he hurried her forward, and, holding her up with his strong arm, conveyed her swiftly and safely through the mazes of that horrible prison, till they reached the outer air.

They were in the garden of the monastery, and, looking up, Aline saw the stars shining in the sky, while in the east a faint glimmer of light showed that the dawn was near.

"Hist! follow me, and make no noise," whispered Bernardo; "but keep in the shadow of the trees."

Aline silently obeyed, and another moment brought them to a little side gate, evidently not in frequent use, for it was with some difficulty that her guide unlocked it; this accomplished, however, he pushed it hastily open, and, thrusting her out, whispered, earnestly, "Linger here not a moment, as you value your life; and flee from the town the instant the gates are opened."

Then, without giving her time for a word of thanks, he shut and locked the postern, and she heard the faint rustle of his garments as he glided cautiously back to the house.

Stunned, bewildered, exhausted by all she had gone

through, for a moment Aline leaned against the wall, almost more dead than alive, and scarcely knowing or heeding where she was; but her infant woke, and its piteful wail roused her to the necessity for exertion if she would save herself and it from a fresh incarceration in that gloomy abode, with all the horrors that would follow; or the friend who had rescued them, from torture and death; and with a terrified start she hugged it close to her breast, and hurried away as fast as her trembling limbs would carry her, nor paused again until she reached a house near the entrance to the town, where she sank down, half fainting, under an arcade, to wait and watch for the opening of the gates.

But few of the inhabitants of Pignerol had yet shaken off their slumbers, and the streets seemed empty and deserted; but now and then a distant sound of footsteps made Aline tremble anew, and shrink farther into the shadow of the building, with the sudden fear that she was pursued. But no one came near her; and at length the gates were opened, and she rose and passed out, taking the road that led to the valleys.

The time of waiting had seemed long, yet she had scarcely recovered strength to move; and the warder at the gate noticed that the first person who passed out that morning was a woman with a young babe in her arms; a woman who tottered with weakness, as if she would have fallen at every step, and whose face of deadly pallor, with its set and rigid features and stony eyes, made him shiver with horror and shrink from her, as she passed him, as though she had been a walking corpse. He looked after her, and wondered who she was, and what terrible blow had fallen upon her; but he never knew, nor ever saw her again.

The sun was nearing the western mountain-tops when the doorway of Hubert Romano's cottage was darkened by a slight female figure, and, starting up with a wild cry of surprise and anguish, Madalena caught the half-fainting form of her sister in her arms. Barbara took the infant and cared for it, while the weeping Madalena laid the young mother—the newly-made widow—upon her own bed, and with the tenderest caresses sought to soothe and relieve her wounded, breaking heart. She asked no question; one look into that pallid, woe-worn face, with its tearless agony, its lines of deep suffering, was enough to tell her all she needed to know; and her tears fell like rain as she bent over this dear only sister, so young, so lovely, so like to a crushed and broken lily in her patient, uncomplaining sorrow. Madalena chafed the cold hands, smoothed the disordered tresses, and bathed the burning brow, all the time murmuring words of sympathy and endearment, or speaking to the poor desolate one of Him who has said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

But her words seemed unheard or unheeded; no sound passed the pale lips, and there was still the same look of unutterable anguish in the wide-open, tearless eyes.

All night Madalena watched and prayed beside her; yet she asked not for her life, but only that she might be resigned to the Master's will—that he would heal her broken heart, put underneath her the everlasting arms, and in his own good time take her home to glory.

The east was growing bright with the coming day, and Madalena, who had been kneeling for some moments by the bedside, sending up her silent but fer-

vent petitions, arose and once more bent over that pale, still form, which had lain there silent and motionless through all those long dreary hours. A slight sigh of relief escaped her as she saw that at last the weary eyes had closed, and that, though the fair, young face still wore an expression of unutterable sadness, the stony look of despair was gone.

"Thank God, she sleeps! she will yet be spared to her babe and to us!" was the glad thought of her heart. But no: Aline's eyes opened, and, gazing up into her sister's face with an expression of intense, yearning affection, she said, in a faint, weak voice, "Madalena, dearest sister, raise me up and fold your arms about me. Let me rest my head on your dear bosom, and I will tell you all."

Very gently and tenderly Madalena raised her and folded her to her loving heart, and then the sad tale was all made known. Aline told of her husband's sufferings in his loathsome dungeon, of his realizing sense of his Saviour's presence and his sustaining grace, of the fearful agonies endured in the chamber of torture, and of the firm, undaunted Christian courage with which they were borne.

Madalena's tears fell fast during the sad recital, and bitter, choking sobs burst from her bosom, for Pierre had been dear to her as an own brother, and Aline was dearer still; but Aline's eyes were tearless, and her voice, though faint and low, and sometimes sinking entirely from weakness, never faltered to the very end.

"And now, my Madalena, I am going to him," she said. "He was faithful unto death, and has received a crown of life; and for me too there is laid up a crown of rejoicing, purchased with my Saviour's blood, and I

go to inherit it. Do not grieve, my beloved sister. It is better so; for to me life were but a barren waste without my husband, and I could never, never forget the dreadful scenes through which I saw him pass; and, oh, what joy to know that together we shall dwell forever with the Lord, and that ere long you too, sweet sister, and all our dear ones, shall be with us there! And you, my Madalena, will be a mother to my baby boy, and love him for my sake; and Hubert will fill a father's place to him and to Louis and little Philip?"

"God helping me, I will," replied Hubert, who had entered the room and drawn near to listen as Aline began her story; and his manly voice trembled with emotion.

"They shall be dear to us as our own children, and little Pierre the pet lamb of the flock," whispered Madalena.

"Let me see him once more, Hubert," said Aline; and Hubert brought the babe, which was sleeping sweetly. The dying mother took it in her arms, and pressed her lips again and again to its soft cheek, then lifted her eyes to heaven, her lips moving as if in prayer, while two tears rolled quickly down her cheeks. Then, giving him back to Hubert, "Tell him," she said, "that his mother's last prayer for him was that he might follow his father even as he followed Christ, and be found faithful even unto death."

She fell back into her sister's arms, her head drooped upon her bosom, and, with a gentle sigh, her spirit took its flight.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Gird your hearts with silent fortitude,
Suffering, yet hoping all things.”

MRS. HEMANS.

It is again the depth of winter, January 12, 1661,—six years having passed away since the opening of our story, and three and a half since the death of Pierre and Aline.

Years they have been of sore trouble and trial to God's dear children, the persecuted Waldenses; the government at Turin still continuing its oppressive measures, and Di Bagnolo and his troops their outrages, so that increasing numbers of the poor persecuted folk have been compelled to abandon their homes and flee for safety to the mountain-fastnesses.

They have been much oppressed in temporal matters; but the wounds they have felt most sensibly have been those aimed at their spiritual life. A former edict had guaranteed the free exercise of their public worship in all places where it was already established, of which San Giovanni was one, and the edict of Pignerol in no way restricted this guarantee; yet “the auditor Gastaldo, who, still a member of the Propaganda, had become governor of the valleys, issued, 15th June, 1657, a decree prohibiting the Waldenses from celebrating their worship at San Giovanni, under a penalty of one thousand crowns of gold against the presiding minister, and of two hundred against each

person present. New Papist missions were established in the valleys: the Jesuits got a footing in every direction; exemption from taxes, and other privileges, were granted to all Catholic converts, while the Protestants were treated with systematic rigor; the Dauphinese pastors, who had come to minister sympathy and consolation, religious and fraternal, to the Waldenses of the valleys, were expelled on the pretext of their being foreigners."

The Waldenses felt that this prohibition to celebrate their worship at San Giovanni was a menace to all their churches, because if one were effectually assailed the rest could not hope long to escape similar treatment.

Leger, the historian, was at that time pastor of the San Giovanni church, to which our friends belonged, Hubert being one of its deacons. Leger was a man of great courage, and had thus far remained at his post in spite of menaces and peril, at which the Propagandists and the Popish clergy were greatly exasperated, and he had been several times cited to appear at Turin; but, the citation setting forth no cause, he had not obeyed it.

To Hubert and his family these had been years of pinching want, privation, and unremitting toil, patiently and cheerfully borne by one and all, because they knew it was the will of God that they should be thus tried and afflicted. The three children committed by Aline to the care of Hubert and Madalena were still with them, dearly loved, and as tenderly cherished as their own, with whom they always shared alike.

Louis, now grown to man's estate, was no longer a burden, but assisted by his labor in providing for the

others; and Philip too, now nine years of age, began to be useful; but the little Pierre was still too young for anything but play; and a happy, playful child he was, never feeling the loss of the parents whose place his kind aunt and uncle so fully supplied.

The day's work was done, the frugal evening meal had been eaten, and the table cleared away, and now all gathered about the fire, and perfect silence reigned in the room, as Hubert opened the family Bible and read aloud from its pages.

It was a pleasant group to look upon:—Hubert, with his grave, thoughtful, kindly face, his gentle wife sitting by his side, with a lovely, sleeping babe upon her knee,—another Aline, named for the dear departed,—and Blanche, now a sweet child of seven, on a stool at her feet; opposite them the aged grandmother, with little Pierre and Hubert's son, Antony, about the same age, one on each side; near her, Paul and Philip, ever inseparable companions, and on their other side Philip's brother Louis, with his calm, thoughtful brow, and face sedate and even sad beyond his years; for the past ever lived in his memory.

The reading over, all knelt while Hubert prayed, and then the little ones were put to bed, and only Barbara and Madalena, Hubert and Louis, remained. They sat for some time longer about the fire, conversing in subdued tones; talking of the portion of Scripture that had been read, of the many great and precious promises of God's holy word, and of the comfort and consolation thus afforded them in the midst of all their toils and trials, of which they spoke in a patient, submissive way, as being less than their sins deserved, and a part of the all things that should work together

for their good ; and then they talked of the joy that was set before them—the hope of an eternity of bliss at God's right hand ; of the promised grace according to their days ; of the dear ones gone before, and of "the Captain of their salvation made perfect through sufferings."

But it was growing late, and, with an affectionate good-night, they separated.

"Hark !" exclaimed Madalena, as Hubert was about to put out the light ; "surely I heard a footstep."

They listened intently. For a moment all was still ; then came a distinct though not loud rap upon the outer door, and Hubert, taking up the lamp, returned to the kitchen, Madalena hastily throwing on her dress again and following him.

"Who is there ? and what is wanted ?" he asked, setting down the light and drawing near the door.

"It is I, Martin Copin," replied a familiar voice, "come to warn you of approaching danger."

Almost before the words had left his lips, the bolts and bars were removed, and he was cordially invited to enter.

"I bring you ill news, my friends," he said, stepping in and walking briskly up and down the room, swinging his arms about in the endeavor to restore the circulation. "It is bitterly cold on the bleak mountain-sides to-night, Hubert ; but if you value your liberty you must flee from your home ere the morning light."

Madalena's cheek grew pale, and she turned a yearning, anxious look upon her husband, who calmly asked, "How so, Martin ? what new danger threatens ?"

Martin glanced compassionately at Madalena as he replied, "To-day a decree was issued by the senate of Turin condemning the Barba Leger to death, and the

deacons and elders of the church of San Giovanni to ten years' labor in the galleys."

"Then, Hubert, flee at once!" cried Madalena, clasping her hands in terror and dismay; "they may be even now coming to arrest you."

"No," said Martin; "but they will be here to-morrow, without doubt, unless a fearful storm should arise to prevent them; and your husband's only safety is in speedy flight."

Hubert saw that it was indeed so, and immediately began making hurried preparations to depart.

"And the Barba Leger and the others—what of them?" he asked, anxiously.

"They, too, have been warned, and, I believe, have all fled," replied Martin. "The barba, I doubt not, is already on his way to England."

"Thank God for that!" said Madalena. "We will all pray that he may reach that land of freedom in safety."

Barbara and Louis, hearing the unbarring of the door and the sound of voices in earnest conversation, had risen and dressed with all haste; and now first one and then the other returned to the kitchen, and, while Louis rekindled the fire and Barbara set food before the visitor and prepared some for Hubert to take with him in his flight, Madalena gathered together a few articles of clothing for him, and made them up into a little bundle, listened to his parting words of advice and consolation, and, following him into the bedroom, watched him with tearful eyes as he bent for a moment over each loved sleeper; then she wrapped his cloak about him with her own loving hands, and, with a tender farewell, they parted, not knowing when, if ever, they should meet again upon earth.

Martin went with him, for he dared not excite suspicion by being found there in the morning; and, following the dear fugitive and his kind, faithful friend with their prayers, Barbara, Madalena, and Louis once more retired to rest.

The cottage which, at the time of the publishing of Gastaldo's edict, stood next below Hubert's, on the southern slope of the hill, was then owned and occupied by a Vaudois named Joseph Orselli. On returning, after the signing of the treaty, Joseph found his little dwelling in ruins. With much labor he rebuilt it, and his wife and little ones had again a home, for which they were truly thankful, though they were still far less comfortable than in former days. But they were not permitted to enjoy it long. Orselli was one day set upon and killed by some of Bagnolo's troopers, and his wife, being very ill at the time, was so overcome by her sad loss that she survived him only a few hours.

The children were then scattered among the neighbors, and the cottage was taken possession of by a family of Papists,—Ursula di Agnolo and her children. Ursula was the widow of a Popish trooper who had been killed in battle by the Waldenses; and she, being a bigoted Papist and a woman of violent temper, bore a bitter hatred to the Vaudois, both on account of their religion and of the manner of her husband's death. She and her children became the pests of the whole hamlet, and especially of the Romanos, who, being her nearest neighbors, were most exposed to her persecutions. It was she who, on the morning succeeding Hubert's flight, guided up the height the soldiers of the garrison of La Tour sent to arrest him, and pointed out his cottage to them.

The family had just risen from their frugal and scanty breakfast when the soldiers rushed in, calling, with many oaths and curses and fierce threats, for Hubert to appear and give himself up.

"He is not here, sirs," said Louis, stepping forward.

"You speak falsely! you have hidden him!" returned one of the troopers, fiercely, at the same time dealing Louis a blow with his musket that felled him to the earth. Some of them then began beating Barbara, Madalena, and the children, to make them tell where Hubert was, while others ransacked the house, searching for him in every nook and corner and helping themselves to whatever they fancied of the goods of the poor cottagers. They then set fire to the house, and went away, vowing vengeance upon any one who should venture to put out the flames. But, the cottage being built of stone and the roof covered with a heavy fall of snow, the fire had made but little progress ere the Vaudois neighbors came to the rescue; and they soon succeeded in extinguishing it.

Louis was so completely stunned by the blow the soldier had given him that he lay for a long time insensible, and his friends began to fear that he was dead; but every effort was made to restore him to consciousness, and at length he revived, and in a few days he had quite recovered from the effects of the injury.

Madalena was very anxious until she heard news of her husband to the effect that he had distanced his pursuers and succeeded in joining a band of his Vaudois brethren—men who, like himself, had fled from the tyranny and oppression of their persecutors to the mountain-fastnesses, where they concealed themselves

in inaccessible caverns, whence they made frequent descents upon the Popish towns and villages, levying contributions on them for the support of themselves and the distressed mountaineers, the tyranny and rapacity of their foes having left them no other means of subsistence.

Leger and Gianavel had both been condemned to death, twenty other persons to the galleys, and many more were under prosecution for having resisted the orders of the duke by exercising the Protestant worship in San Giovanni. The condemned men having fled, troops were sent to lay waste their little farms and destroy their houses. Leger went to England, and Gianavel became the leader of the band of mountaineers—styled banditti by the government—which daily increased in numbers as the continued outrages of the brutal soldiery drove more and more of the oppressed people from their homes to the mountain-wilds.

Barbara and Madalena still remained, with their children, in their little cottage on the heights, knowing that they were in daily and hourly peril from Bagnolo's troops, yet almost without fear, because they knew also that they were under the constant protection of Him without whom not a hair of their heads could perish.

Louis was with them still, and exerted himself to the utmost for the support of the family; nor were their own hands ever idle, and occasionally a supply came from Hubert; yet gaunt famine often stared them in the face, and clothes grew threadbare and old, while no means were at hand to replace them; and they had need of strong faith to keep their hearts from sinking utterly.

They had also another and sore trial in their Papist neighbors, Ursula and her children, of whom she had four: the eldest, Andrea, about a year older than Philip and Paul, Susette, near Blanche's age, and Nina and Pietro, two or three years younger. Ursula's cottage being a little lower down the slope of the hill than their own, and very near the path that led to the plain, whither necessity often called them, they were compelled frequently to pass within a few feet of the little inclosure which surrounded her dwelling; and it was the especial delight of both mother and children to sally forth on these occasions and cast stones and dirt at the unoffending Waldenses, whom they styled "obstinate heretics and Lutherans," at the same time loading them with every other abusive epithet that they could think of; and they were neither few nor mild. Nor could the Vaudois children of the hamlet at any time go out to play or to gather flowers or berries upon the hill-sides without exposing themselves to the same harsh and abusive treatment.

All this was borne by Barbara and Madalena with the utmost Christian patience, meekness, and forbearance, and in general by the children also. They "returned not railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; when they suffered they threatened not, but committed themselves to Him that judgeth righteously;" and it was of him, the meek and lowly Jesus, and his forgiving love, that the mother and grandmother always spoke to the little ones when they came in wearied and worn out, or vexed and irritated by the rude and insulting behavior of their insolent neighbors.

There was a difference in these Waldensian children, though all had had the same careful, pious training and

the same good example set before them. Like the rest of the human race, they were born with corrupt natures, and had need of renewing grace. On Blanche this seemed to have been bestowed in her very babyhood, and almost before she was able to lisp his holy name she gave evidence of sincere love to the Saviour, and an earnest desire to know and do his will. She was a very lovely child, both in appearance and disposition, gentle, affectionate, and full of a winning sweetness that made her very dear to the hearts of her parents and friends. In Paul, the change had not been wrought so early; but for several years past he too had been walking in the narrow way, and showing by his conduct and conversation that he had become a child of God. But with the others it was different. Though kind to each other and ever affectionate, respectful, and obedient to their parents, they had not yet learned to love God, and sometimes showed a spirit of hatred and revenge toward their enemies, or indulged in murmurings and complaints on account of the hardships they were forced to endure. Philip, especially, had a fiery temper, which sometimes got beyond his control, and tempted him to revenge the insults and injuries heaped upon his companions and himself by Ursula and her children. Particularly was this the case when Blanche was the victim, for he had conceived for her the most passionate affection, seemingly far exceeding in intensity even that which her own brothers felt for her, though they, too, loved her very dearly.

Blanche was one day toiling up the height with a small bundle of sticks which she had been gathering, when Andrea di Agnolo, springing out from behind a

clump of bushes, snatched her burden from her, threw it down the precipice, and flung a handful of dirt in her face and eyes, at the same time calling her by every vile name he could think of, and threatening to throw her after the wood.

The next instant Philip, who, noticing his movements and suspecting his design, had followed him unperceived, sprang upon him like a young tiger, threw him upon the ground, and, taking him by the collar, threatened to roll him down the precipice. Andrea, who was an arrant coward, now roared for mercy.

"You shall have it on one condition," said Philip: "that you immediately beg Blanche's pardon, and promise never to molest her in future."

"Ask pardon of a miserable heretic? Never!" exclaimed Andrea, making a vigorous effort to rise and wrench himself free from Philip's grasp. But Philip held him fast, and, dragging him to the very edge of the precipice, again threatened to roll him down. Andrea howled and struggled, and Blanche, interfering, begged Philip to let him go.

"That I will not until he complies with the conditions," replied Philip.

Andrea put out his hand, and, seizing a loose bit of stone, threw it at Blanche, striking her on the side of the head and inflicting a wound from which the blood flowed freely.

This was more than Philip could stand, and he gave the boy a severe drubbing and sent him home limping and howling with pain.

"Ah, Philip," said Blanche, in a sorrowful tone, "that surely was not right; for do you not remember the words of Jesus, 'I say unto you, that ye resist not

evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also'?"

Philip made no reply, but busied himself with gathering some leaves and trying to stanch the blood still trickling from the wound on his little reprover's head.

"I fear you have made him and the others still more our enemies than before," continued Blanche, with a sigh.

"I fear so, indeed, Blanche; but who could stand by and see you so abused?" replied Philip, still trembling with passion. "Not I, I am sure; my temper will get the better of me at such times."

"Ask the Lord to help you to govern it, dear Philip," she said. "You know the Bible says, 'He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.' And remember how the Lord Jesus reproved his disciples, saying, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' when they would have called down fire from heaven upon those who ill treated him."

Their fears were, alas, but too well founded. Ursula rushed out upon them, club in hand, as they passed, and gave them each a severe beating. Nor was that sufficient to satisfy her revenge; but from that hour she conceived a deep-laid plot to bring bitter distress and anguish upon those two children and all who loved them.

Madalena shed tears over her darling Blanche, and Philip too, who was scarcely less dear to her, when they came in bruised and bleeding from Ursula's cruel blows; yet she spoke no word of anger or hatred, but, while binding up their wounds, reminded them of their Lord's command, "Love your enemies," and of his

own dying prayer for his murderers. And then she spoke compassionately of their Papist neighbors as being greatly to be pitied, because of their spiritual darkness and bondage.

"They, poor creatures, know nothing of the true riches," she said; "nothing of the precious love of Christ, and the blessedness of resting their souls upon him as their all-atoning sacrifice, and of feeling that their sins are forgiven for the sake of what he has done and suffered, and all washed away in his precious blood. Ah, my children, how blest is our lot above theirs! Let us pity and forgive them, and let us pray that the Lord may bring them to the knowledge of himself."

Ursula would have rejected Madalena's pity with scorn and contempt, had she known anything about it, for she considered herself greatly superior to her poor "heretic" neighbors; for were not she and her children far better fed and clothed than they? and could not her cottage boast of more and better furniture than theirs?

Casella, the hamlet in which they lived, being so far up the heights, was not so frequently visited by the Propagandists as those that were easier of access; yet they were not altogether free from their intrusion. A lady member, in whose district they were, though finding the path too steep and dangerous for her in the winter-time, occasionally visited them in the summer months, going about from house to house, prying into their family secrets, taking note of their bitter privations, and trying her arts and blandishments upon all, old and young, in the pious endeavor to lead them to abandon their faith and deny their Lord for worldly gain.

The Vandois families would gladly have closed their

doors against her; but she was ever a most welcome visitor at Ursula's cottage. And no wonder; for she loaded this woman and her children with gifts, hoping thereby to excite the envy and cupidity of the Waldenses, to whom she offered the same on condition of a promise to abjure their heresy and go to mass. But in vain were her efforts; not one could she persuade to accept her conditions, though food and clothing were indeed tempting baits to those who for years had not known what it was to have a comfortable supply of either.

Madalena sat beside her sleeping infant, now and then touching the cradle with her foot, while at the same time her hands were busily engaged in mending an old and well-worn garment. Barbara was similarly occupied in another part of the room. Louis was away at his work, and had taken the older boys with him, and Blanche had the two little ones in a corner, teaching them their letters. Madalena sighed, and a tear rolled down her cheek, as she lifted her head to look at them, for the little faces were pale and pinched with famine, and, alas, there was no food in the house. Winter was coming on, too—for we have passed over nearly a year since Hubert's flight—the weather already so cold that they often shivered over their scanty fire, and not one of the family possessed a single garment that had not been darned and patched many times; nor could she see any prospect of renewing them or supplying the hungry little ones with food, save the promises of Him who has said, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

There was a knock at the door, and Blanche went to open it. She found a lady standing there, whom she

politely invited to walk in. It was the Propagandist; and this was by no means her first visit to the cottage. As she entered, Madalena rose, and gave her a seat, then resumed her own, and went on with her work.

"You seem busy this morning," remarked the visitor, glancing from Madalena to Barbara, and back again, and apparently addressing both; "but why do you waste time over those old, worn-out garments, when you might just as well have new ones?"

"We see no honest and honorable way of procuring new ones, signora: therefore we must be content to mend the old," replied Barbara, in a patient, cheerful tone.

The visitor contemptuously turned her back upon her, and addressed herself to Madalena. "Come," she said; "how can you, a woman of good sense and kind heart, be so silly, and so cruel to these little, pale-faced, half-starved children? Going to mass would be a small matter, compared to letting them suffer with cold and hunger and nakedness;—to say nothing of what you must endure yourself."

"Nay, madame, I cannot suffer for my Lord the half of what he has endured for me," said Madalena; "and as for my beloved children, I would choose for them, as well as for myself, eternal riches rather than the good things of earth, which must perish with the using; nor can I forget that the Master has said, 'He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.'"

"Foolish woman! your children are almost starved now," said the Propagandist; "and what have you to trust to for the future?"

"I trust in Him who feedeth the young ravens when they cry," replied Madalena, "and who has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' 'The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.'"

"You are wanting now," replied the tempter, with an incredulous smile, "and winter will soon be upon us in all its rigor; and what will you do then? Come; be advised; this is my last visit for the season, and it is only a small concession I ask—that you attend mass once—and I will supply you and your children with food and clothing for the winter. What do you say? Look at these famished faces, these delicate limbs but half protected from the cold, and, if you have a mother's heart, can you hesitate?" And, taking the little boys by the hand as she spoke, she made them stand directly in front of Madalena.

Tears fell fast down the poor mother's cheeks, and, for some moments, sobs choked her utterance.

"He who reads the heart alone knows how I love them," she said, at last; "but I cannot deny him, nor forget his own words, 'He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.'"

"You will repent of your obstinacy before the winter is over," said the Propagandist, angrily.

"Signora," said Barbara, "our trust is in One who is infinite in power and wisdom, and who loves us with an everlasting and boundless love. He has told us that trials are needful for us here—that through much tribulation we enter the kingdom of heaven; and his love is a pledge that he will not allow us to suffer one unneeded pang; and he has promised grace according to our day. May we not well leave all our concerns

—all our wants, present and future—in his hands, without doubt or fear?”

“Obstinate, impudent heretics! ungrateful wretches! I leave you to your fate!” exclaimed the signora, starting up with an angry flush on her brow; and, without another word, she turned on her heel and went away.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Thus, while they look’d, a flourish proud,
Where mingled trump, and clarion loud,
And fife and kettle drum,
And sackbut deep, and psaltery,
And war-pipe with discordant cry,
And cymbal clattering to the sky,
Making wild music bold and high,
Did up the mountain come.”

SCOTT: *Marmion*.

TIME rolled on; the government continued its prosecutions and condemnations, the Propaganda its zealous attempts at conversion, Di Bagnolo and his troops their outrages; and the only mortal help of the poor Waldenses under these accumulated ills was in Gianavel and his band. Every day witnessed some daring exploit on their part, and scarcely a day passed in which an action of more or less importance did not take place between them and the Popish troops sent against them; and anxiously our friends in Casella inquired for news when any of their number returned from a short sojourn in the plain below, or a visit was paid them by a Waldensian from the neighboring mountains

or valleys. Louis Masson was the usual bearer of tidings to Barbara and Madalena; but sometimes Hubert himself ventured to return to his home for a few hours under cover of the night, perchance bringing with him one or more of his comrades.

It was near the close of a lovely day in June, 1663, that Louis Masson and Maurice Jaquin might have been seen toiling up the path toward Hubert's cottage, whither they were bound. Their faces were full of grave and anxious thought, and, where the path would admit of it, they walked side by side, conversing in low, earnest tones.

They found Barbara and Madalena industriously employed, as usual—the one with her spinning-wheel, the other in preparing the frugal supper of rye-bread, potatoes, and goat's milk. Both looked up and greeted the lads kindly as they entered; then Madalena, addressing Louis, asked, "What news? Something unusual has happened; I see it in your faces."

"Yes, mother," said Louis, for thus affectionately were he and Philip and the little orphan Pierre accustomed to address her: "the duke has issued a new edict, commanding all to take up arms against the 'banditti,' as he styles our outlawed brethren, coolly describing them as persons assembled together for mere purposes of pillage. Two hundred and sixty men, drafted from the different communes, are to collect at Chiabaso and there await the orders of the commandant of Brierasco, and each commune is to give a hostage for its fidelity."

"And has the duke nothing to say concerning the outrages daily committed by his own soldiers?" asked Barbara.

"Yes" said Louis; "he promises to institute an inquiry, at Turin, into the conduct of the Count di Bagnolo, and to pardon the fugitive Vaudois on condition of their returning home within the space of fifteen days."

"That is, on condition of their placing themselves in his power," said Barbara, significantly.

"Exactly so," said Maurice; "and by the same beneficent and friendly edict Captain Gianavel is condemned to be torn with pincers, to be quartered, and then to have his head cut off and stuck up at the end of a pike on some elevated point. Also the condemnation of the Barba Leger is reiterated, and Artus, Bastia, Rivorio, Revel, and others—in all, thirty-five of our leaders—are condemned to death and the confiscation of their goods, six others to the galleys, and four to ten years' imprisonment. May we not well admire the clemency of the Propaganda?"

"Surely," exclaimed Madalena, with a shudder, "our brethren will be wiser than to comply with the terms of such an edict. Think you not so, Louis?"

"I think the 'banditti' will hardly lay down their arms and place themselves in the duke's power, mother," he answered. "And Maurice and I, not waiting to be drafted among the two hundred and sixty to collect at Chiabaso, have resolved to join Gianavel's band at once."

"It is right," she said; "and may the blessing of the Lord go with you."

"How soon do you go, my sons?" asked Barbara.

"To-night, God willing," replied Louis; and Maurice added, "We think the more prompt and decided our action the better."

"Certainly," she replied; "when once you are convinced of the right course, there is nothing gained by delay."

"The governor of La Tour and the ducal treasurer-general are very urgent with our people to accept the duke's terms," remarked Maurice.

"And think you that any of the communes will consent?" asked Madalena, anxiously.

"The commune of Prarustin and those of your own valley of Luserna have declined to take the responsibility of refusing," he replied; "but what will be done in the end I know not. The seigneurs have been trying to sow dissension among us, and, failing in that, now insist that the people of the valley of Luserna shall give a proof of their peaceful spirit by escorting a convoy of provisions and ammunition to Miraboco."

Barbara stopped her wheel and let the thread fall from her hand in her surprise and alarm at this announcement. "It cannot be possible they will consent!" she exclaimed. "What! cut off our only door of escape in case of another persecution? It were madness to think of it."

"So it seems to me, and to many others," said Louis. "Nevertheless, I fear they will do it; for the governor and treasurer-general have most solemnly assured them that the most perfect peace will be accorded them in acknowledgment of this act of submission, so that they and their families may all return to their homes without the least fear for the future."

"Alas!" said Madalena, "have they so soon forgotten Pianeza's promises before that last dreadful massacre, and how faithlessly they were violated?"

Louis shuddered, and turned pale, while a spasm of

pain contracted Maurice's brow, and he seemed to grow sick and faint at the terrible recollections those words called up.

Barbara sighed deeply, then said, "Let us not be troubled about the future, my children; that is in the Lord's hands, and he will do what seemeth him good. The Lord reigneth; 'he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' Oh, what a comfort to know that! for this God is our God for ever and ever—our Father and our Friend!"

"Supper is ready; let us eat," said Madalena; and, going to the door, she called the children, the elder of whom were at work, and the younger at play, in the little inclosure behind the dwelling.

The young men left early in the evening, and, the children being all in bed, Madalena and her mother were left sitting alone at their work. They talked long and earnestly of the news brought by Louis and his young friend, and of the dangers that seemed to threaten their beloved valleys, and their voices were low and sad, and there was a look of care upon their brows. But then they spoke of that better land to which they were journeying, where they should be free from oppressors and persecutors, from sin and toil and pain, living forever with the Lord they loved so well that for his dear sake they were willing to suffer the loss of all things here below; and their faces grew calm and bright again, and they laid them down in peace and slept, for the Lord sustained them.

It was not without reason that they were thus alarmed and anxious at the prospect of such a conces-

sion on the part of the Waldenses as the conveying of munitions of war to the fortress of Miraboco ; for it commanded a narrow pass which led from the valley of Luserna into Dauphiny, and which was their only door of escape into that province, whither they had often fled in former times of persecution. Ah! well indeed was it for these poor, feeble women of a persecuted race that they were able to put their trust in the Lord and stay them upon their God; else fear and anxiety had driven sleep from their pillows on this and many another night of danger and distress. But to them the promise was fulfilled, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee," and "So he giveth his beloved sleep."

That night the young men carried out their intention of joining Gianavel's band; and a few days later, news came to Casella that, though the Waldenses had been preparing—not without much distrust—to convey the supplies to the fortress, they had given it up on learning that troops, secretly dispatched from Turin, were marching to attack them. "Six regiments of the royal guard," says Muston, "had, in fact, quitted the capital on the 29th of June, under the command of the Marquis de Fleury, eleven days before the expiration of the delay which had been granted to the Waldenses within which they might return home, and four days before the expiration of that within which they were to give their answer on the conditions proposed to them. Indeed, as was afterward ascertained, fresh troops had been secretly directed toward La Tour and Luserna, even before those conditions were propounded."

Another instance of Popish perfidy.

For several days no further tidings came, and they could but wait, striving to possess their souls in patience. But, one night early in July, a low knock at the outer door roused Madalena from sleep, and, on going to it, great was her joy to hear her husband's voice softly asking for admittance. Quickly the bolts and bars were withdrawn, and in a moment his arms were clasped about her, and her head rested on his bosom.

"Are you alone, Hubert?" she asked.

"Quite alone," he said. "I have brought you some provisions—part of a sheep, and a small sack of flour—for we have been very successful of late. The army is near us to-night—occupying the slopes of San Giovanni—and I can remain with you for some hours, but must return ere break of day, for troops are said to be on the march against us, and we know not how soon we may be attacked."

"We heard that such was the report," said Madalena, "and that it had caused the Vaudois to abandon their purpose to convey munitions to the fortress. Is it so?"

"Yes," he said; "upon learning the movements of the troops they at once abandoned their design, and now all are preparing for resistance."

Barbara slept but lightly, as the aged are apt to do, and, roused by the sound of her son's voice, she had risen and dressed, and now, entering the room, she greeted him joyfully, and eagerly questioned him concerning the state of affairs in the valleys, while Madalena went to awaken the children, that they too might enjoy their father's visit, for it was long since they had seen him, and his stay must necessarily be

short, as duty required him to be in the camp again so soon.

How joyfully they clustered about him ! how eagerly they listened to every word that fell from his lips ! how their souls melted within them as he once more read to them from God's holy word, and, kneeling, offered up fervent petitions for them and for his persecuted people ! and, alas ! how they mourned and wept when they found he must leave them again so soon, to go back to the dangers and privations of his soldier-life !

It was near morning when Hubert returned to the camp. All was quiet, and he threw himself down beside his sleeping comrades to seek a little repose ; but he had not slept long when the heavy tramp of armed men was heard in the distance ; the Waldensian sentries gave the alarm, and the whole band instantly started from their sleep and sprang to arms.

Day was just breaking, and Gianavel soon perceived that two bodies of troops, one coming up the San Giovanni road and led by the Marquis de Fleury, the other advancing by the ascent of Bricheraseo, under the command of the Count di Bagnolo, were forming a junction in front of him, on the higher plateau, where these roads met, and that their object was doubtless to take possession of La Vachera, which, rising above that plateau, commands the divergence of the three valleys ; and hearing, also, from a scout who came dashing into the camp, that the Marquis de Angrogna, at the head of the cavalry of San Segonzo, was advancing toward the same point by the heights of Roccapiatta, he immediately dispatched a body of sixty picked men, of whom Hubert was one, to Le Porte d'Angrogna, a defile opening upon the plateau and covering both La Vachera and Roccamanante.

He then led the rest of his little army, numbering only six hundred men, by the mountain-paths he knew so well, to the heights of Roccamanante, natural escarpments almost inaccessible to the enemy.

Louis and Maurice were close together on the march; and with firm, elastic tread, and hearts burning with a desire to do great things that day for their cause and country, they followed their gallant leader.

Reaching the heights, "Here!" cried he to his men, "here is our Tabor! Let us pray to the Almighty for aid and encouragement." And, all falling on their knees, he led them in a fervent prayer.

The inhabitants of Casella, too, had heard the tread of the invading force, and the alarm given by the Vaudois sentinels, and, rushing from their dwellings, they spread themselves about upon the crags and points of rock, whence they might hope to obtain a view of the approaching conflict. Barbara and Madalena, with their children, were there among the rest, watching, with throbbing hearts, the movements of their friends and foes. Ursula and her children were there also, standing apart from the others, and talking in loud, boastful tones of the victory about to be achieved by the Popish troops.

"Ah! ye may well tremble," she screamed, turning toward the Romanos, and shaking her fist at them; "ye may well tremble and turn pale, ye obstinate Lutheran heretics! Tremble and weep for your miserable handful of banditti, for ye'll soon see them scattered like the chaff before the wind. Look at his highness's brave troops, marching so gallantly to the attack. They'll have an easy victory; for they're ten to one of your miserable heretic rabble. And see yonder the brave

cavalry of San Segonzo coming to their assistance," she added, pointing to the heights of Roccapiatta, where a troop of horse could now be descried moving toward La Vachera from that direction. "Ah, yes! we'll soon see your wretched crew of bandits and cut-throat heretics cut down like grass before the mower's scythe."

"Let not him that putteth on his armor boast as he that putteth it off," murmured Barbara, as Madalena turned away her head with a heavy sigh; "'tis very like to Goliath defying the armies of Israel, and, God willing, shall turn out in the end as vainglorious boasting."

"See!" cried Philip, breathlessly; "they are moving to the attack!"

The Waldenses had just risen from their knees; the word was given, and instantly they spread themselves among the rocks, occupying every access. Louis and Maurice, still close together, looked down from their height upon the advancing foe. On, on they came, the rocks reverberating with their shouts and the sound of their clarions and trumpets, and their steel breastplates and the points of their spears and halberts glittering in the bright beams of the morning sun. Maurice was trembling with excitement, and a shudder ran through his frame at the thought of the blood that was about to be shed; but Louis stood by his side, calm and firm as a rock. Nearer and nearer they came; now they were just at hand, and again the word was given, and the Waldenses poured down a destructive fire upon them.

Di Bagnolo halted to take a view of the position, then ordered an assault. It was vigorously repulsed, and with terrible loss to the assailants. They took

breath, and a second time they tried the experiment, but with no better success. Di Bagnolo had already lost three hundred soldiers, and now he ordered his men to scale the rocks. They attempted to obey; but each man, as he reached the top, found himself hurled back upon his fellows.

A superstitious terror now seized upon them. They remembered the stories their priests had told them of the Waldenses being in league with the devil to secure invulnerability, and of their receiving in their skirts the bullets that would have riddled the bodies of other men.

"See!" exclaimed Louis; "they hesitate to renew the attack, and seem inclined to draw back!" And, even as he spoke, Gianavel, whose quick eye had at once perceived the hesitation, cried out, "Let us sweep these cowards from the hill!" and promptly his men obeyed. Dashing down impetuously upon the already wavering foe, they completed their discomfiture, increasing their panic to such a degree that they turned and fled in wild confusion, carrying Di Bagnolo with them in their flight, and hotly pursued by the Waldenses; nor stayed until they had got far down into the plain, losing a large number of their body on the way. Gianavel rallied his men, returned to the plateau, and, after giving thanks for the victory, hastened to rejoin the sixty warriors he had sent to guard Le Porte d'Angrogna. He found, as he expected, that they had been able hitherto to keep in check the whole force of De Fleury; but the latter, having advanced gradually from point to point, was just about to hem them in, when Gianavel, coming up with his six hundred victors, took the Papists in flank, while the sixty warriors,

dashing out from their defile, attacked them vigorously in front; and they, understanding at once at sight of Gianavel and his men that Di Bagnolo was defeated, also gave way, after a short struggle, and fled, the Waldenses pursuing as impetuously as before. It was a glorious victory for the Waldenses; for while they, favored by their position and knowledge of the ground, lost only six men, not fewer than six hundred of the Papists fell dead during the engagement, and hundreds more died afterward of their wounds.

Ursula, watching with scowling looks the unexpected turn affairs were taking, had retreated sullenly to her cottage as soon as she saw Di Bagnolo's troops give way before the impetuous charge of the Waldenses; but the Vaudois women and children remained upon the crags, gazing with intense interest upon the scene, and, when De Fleury's troops also gave way and fled, they sent up a cry of joy and gratitude to God. But their rejoicing was tempered with anxiety and dread; for none knew as yet what loved ones might have fallen.

And even while the words of joy and praise were still upon their lips, the tall form and dark, scowling face of Ursula suddenly appeared again among them, and striding up to Madalena, stretching out her long, bony arm, and shaking her fist in her face, "Ye may laugh and rejoice now," she hissed, "but the time's not far distant when your joy shall be turned into mourning; for a bitter, bitter sorrow lies before ye, Madalena Romano—a sorrow that ye'll carry with ye to your grave and never be able to forget, day nor night." And, turning about, she strode rapidly back to her cottage and disappeared within the doorway.

Blanche turned pale and clung tremblingly to her mother, for the parting glance of hatred and triumphant malice had been directed full at her.

"Oh, mother, what did she mean? what can be about to befall us?" asked the child, with a shudder.

"Fear not, little one; remember we are all in the hands of our God, and nothing can befall us without his will," replied Barbara, gently stroking the child's hair and speaking in a soothing tone, for Madalena stood pale and silent, scarcely seeming to have heard the question. "Daughter," said Barbara, laying her other hand on Madalena's shoulder, "'let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid.' They are the words of Him who has also said, 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,' and 'Unto me all power is given in heaven and in earth.'"

Madalena answered with a grateful but sad smile, and, turning away with eyes half filled with tears, went back to her house and took up the work she had dropped on hearing the sentinels' alarm.

Some hours passed slowly by, while she tried to give her attention to her work and cast her care on Him who, she well knew, cared for her, but found herself constantly straining her ear to catch the sound of the coming footsteps of some messenger bringing news of her loved ones; and then Maurice entered, startling them with his pale face and bleeding arm, for he had received a severe sword-cut, but bringing the glad tidings of the completeness of the victory and the slight loss of the Waldenses, and that Captain Gianavel, Hubert, Antony, and Louis had all escaped unhurt. Maurice had come to have his wound dressed by Barbara, who was skilled in such matters, and, this

done, he returned to his comrades, refusing to stay for even an hour's rest and refreshment.

Several skirmishes took place within the next few days, in each of which the numbers of the enemy were more or less diminished, while Gianavel's army was constantly increasing by the addition of other Waldenses, and also of French Protestants, who came to aid their persecuted brethren.

The court of Turin, incredulous that such an army as they had, sent into the valleys could, if under competent command, be defeated by a handful of undisciplined mountaineers, laid the blame of their reverses, not where it belonged—upon the wickedness of their cause—but upon the Marquis de Fleury, and accordingly superseded him, putting the Count di San Damiano in his place.

The day after the arrival of the latter in the valleys, he marched from Luserna, at the head of fifteen hundred men, to attack Rora, at that time defended by fifteen Waldenses and eight Frenchmen. They made a brave and gallant defense, but were, of course, defeated by such overwhelming numbers and cut to pieces, with the exception of one, who was taken prisoner.

When this news reached Barbara Romano, her sorrow for the Rorans was mingled with thankfulness that her son Antony had escaped the fate of its brave defenders by being absent in the ranks of Gianavel's little army. The count, much elated by this great victory, returned the next day to the valley of Luserna, and, crossing the Pelice, set fire to the village of Santa Margarita, when two hundred Waldenses, descending by the defile of Copion, fell suddenly upon

his army, put them to flight, and killed several hundred of them.

The march of the Popish troops across the valley, and the smoke of the burning village, had been seen by our friends from the heights where they dwelt, nor had the sounds of mortal combat failed to reach them; and rejoiced and thankful were they to learn that the enemy had again been defeated.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Hark! to the hurried question of despair:

'Where is my child?' an echo answers, 'Where?'"

BYRON: *Bride of Abydos*.

THE afternoon was very warm and bright, and Madalena and her mother had taken their work to the shade of the trees in front of the cottage, where they sat busily plying their needles, when a young lad, the son of a near neighbor, came rushing by in an excited manner.

"What is it, Jean?" they called after him. "What has happened?"

"Why, Mother Barbara," he answered, coming back, panting with running, and planting himself in front of them, with his back against a tree, "have you not heard of the new and monstrous edict just published by the duke?"

"No," she said. "What is it, Jean? anything worse than we have had before?"

"It declares us all—all the inhabitants of all the

valleys—guilty of high treason, and condemns us to death and the confiscation of all our goods,” he replied. “I think it is time for every Vaudois, capable of bearing arms, to take the field; and I can no longer stay at home, but am even now hastening to join Captain Gianavel’s band.”

“Was ever so monstrous an edict given to the world?” exclaimed Philip, who stood near. “Would I were old enough to go with you, Jean! What, grandmother, do you think will be the effect?”

“I think it can have none whatever, unless to make our people more determined to resist,” she answered, with a deep-drawn sigh and a mournful shake of the head; “for what is to be gained by submission, or lost by continuing in arms, since we are all already condemned to the loss of property and life?”

“No,” said Jean, earnestly; “we are already suffering bitter privations, but we have now no choice but to keep the field and resist to the end; and this we will do, trusting in our God for deliverance.”

“And he will send it in his own good time; none ever trusted in him and were put to shame,” said Barbara, as the lad turned again and hastened on his way.

“How long, O Lord, how long?” murmured Madalena; “will thine anger burn forever against the sheep of thy pasture?”

“He is chastening us sore for our sins,” said Barbara. “Oh, may we be zealous and repent, that his anger may be turned away from us!”

“Why do they talk so?” muttered Philip through his clinched teeth, as he stepped back out of view; “for I am sure it is all the doings of those wicked Propagandists.” And he doubled up his fist in a way that

showed what a relief it would be to his feelings to return them blow for blow.

But the sweet voice of Blanche called to him from the house.

"Come, Philip," she said; "we are all going down by the bridge; will you not go with us?" and, turning round, he saw her standing in the porch, with the infant Hugo—the youngest lamb of Madalena's flock, a babe about a year old, named for the dear ones gone—in her arms, while Pierre and Antony and little Aline—now a sweet child of three—were gathered about her.

"Yes, I will go with you," he said, moving toward her; "and you must let me carry little Hugo. But where is Paul?"

"Coming," said Paul, answering for himself, as he stepped from the doorway; "and I have already promised little Hugo that I will carry him down the hill," he added, taking the little one from Blanche's arms, and moving on, followed by the younger children.

Philip hung behind, and Blanche would not leave him.

"What ails you, Philip?" she asked, laying her hand on his arm. "I never saw you look so fierce, except on that day when you would have rolled Andrea down the hill."

"You did not, then, hear the news brought by Jean Monnen?" he said, inquiringly.

"No; what was it?" she asked; "has there been another battle?"

"There has been an edict," he answered, "a most cruel, iniquitous thing, declaring all the inhabitants of all the valleys guilty of high treason, and condemning

them to death and the confiscation of all their goods. What think you of that, Blanche?"

She stood still for a moment, and, clasping her hands together, looked at him with a face full of surprise and alarm. "Is it indeed so?" she exclaimed, the tears streaming down her pale cheeks. "Ah, truly the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and is chastening us very sore for our sins."

"Don't!" cried Philip, almost fiercely. "Why must you and mother and grandmother all talk in that way? I am sure it is not the Lord, but the Propagandists—those cruel wretches who have no bowels of compassion—that have wrought us this mischief. No, Blanche, it is not the Lord, but the she-wolf of Rome."

"Nay, Philip," she answered, gently, "can anything happen without his will? and have you forgotten how the Psalmist prays, 'Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword'?"

"But why do you all say that it is for our sins?" he asked, indignantly. "I know that we are all sinners, because the Bible says so, though I never could see any fault in mother, father, or grandmother, or in you either, Blanche; but are not the Papists, and especially the Propagandists, far greater sinners than any of the Vaudois? and yet see how they are prospered."

"They have less light," replied his young companion. "And ah, Philip, you forget what the Bible says, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' Surely it is because we are his own people that we are thus chastened, that we may be made partakers of his holiness, and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Philip was silenced, but not convinced. He did not speak again for a moment, but, giving his hand to Blanche, helped her down the steep hill-side.

"Are you thankful for these trials, Blanche?" he asked, presently, — "these troubles that send father away from us and expose him to constant danger and hardship, and keep mother, and grandmother, and all of us who are old enough, toiling continually, and, after all, suffering for want of food and clothing?"

"Please do not ask me, Philip," she said, weeping. "I know it is the Lord's will, and therefore must be for the best; and it is my prayer that he would help me to believe it and be content and thankful; and, oh, Philip, should we not be when we remember what he suffered for us, and what he tells us in his word, that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?"

Here the conversation ended, for they had reached the foot of the hill, and now rejoined their companions, who were seated on the rocks near to a little foot-bridge which crossed a mountain-torrent that came dashing and foaming down from the heights above, rushing and roaring through the gorges of the hills, and then went singing and dancing on over the plains and meadows, till it lost itself in the waters of the Pelia. Here the children loved to play, and often spent hours amusing themselves by throwing in stones or sailing bits of bark upon the water. The three little ones had already begun their sport, and, while Blanche seated herself upon a rock with Hugo in her arms, Paul and Philip wandered off together in search of the beautiful wild flowers

that grew high upon the sides of the hills and in the clefts of the rocks.

"We will not go far, Blanche," Paul said, as they left her, "but will be quite within call if you want us. You do not mind being left alone with the little ones for a few moments?"

"Oh, no," she answered, cheerfully; "and I want you to gather beautiful bouquets for mother and grandmother, for they love flowers so dearly, and can so seldom get out here to pick them for themselves, or to see them growing."

Philip looked back when they had climbed some distance up the crags, and thought how lovely Blanche was, sitting there with her fair cheek resting against her baby brother's curly head, and her soft dark eyes fixed dreamily upon the waters of the torrent, as it went foaming and fretting by at her feet. She sat alone; for Aline and the little boys had traveled on higher up the stream, and were continuing their sport, laughing and shouting in childish glee.

"Look at Blanche, Paul," said Philip; "is she not sweet and beautiful?"

"Yes," said Paul, glancing back as requested. "Dear Blanche! Oh, Philip, I cannot bear the thought of harm ever coming to her!" And he sighed deeply.

"No, nor I," said Philip, and his voice was low and husky; "but, oh, what else can we look forward to? Paul! Paul! are we always to be a persecuted race?"

"Only so long as it may please the Lord," replied Paul, reverently. "They could have no power at all against us, except it were given them from above."

Philip shrugged his shoulders, and turned away with a gesture of impatience. "Always and forever

the same strain from them all!" he muttered to himself. "It's just the same with father, and Louis too. And yet," he thought, "perhaps it would be better for me if I could look upon these things as they do: but I cannot help thinking of them as altogether the work of the Propagandists, and longing to turn the tables upon them and let them know by experience what it is to suffer all they inflict upon us."

"You heard Jean's report?" he said, inquiringly, turning to Paul again.

"Yes," was the quiet though sad reply; "but, dear Philip, we are in the Lord's hands, and not a hair of our heads shall perish without his will."

They wandered on for some time in silence, plucking the sweet, fragrant blossoms, each occupied with his own thoughts; then Philip suddenly started up from a mossy bank, where he had that moment thrown himself, and, sending a hasty glance about him, "Paul," he exclaimed, "we are going too far! Let us return at once. We are quite out of sight of the others, and out of hearing too; for the shouts of the little ones no longer reach us."

"Yes, let us retrace our steps at once," said Paul, with a look of alarm. "I was not aware that we had gone so far. But I think it is the rush of the waters that drowns the voices of the little ones," he added, as they began hastily to descend the rocks.

Both looked with eager anxiety toward the bridge, as they came in sight of it. There was the rock on which Blanche had been sitting a few moments before; but where was she?

Not there, nor anywhere within sight. No living creature was to be seen about the spot, nor any sound

to be heard, save the rush and roar of the torrent as it hurried on over its rocky bed. The boys sent a sweeping, searching glance around, then looked in one another's faces in blank dismay, each reading in the pale, agitated features of the other a confirmation of his own fears.

"Where, oh, where are they?" gasped Philip. "Perhaps in sport, hiding behind the rocks." And, hastily swinging himself down beside the stream, he rushed along, closely followed by Paul, and both calling the name of each lost one in turn, "Blanche! Pierre! Antony! Aline!" But no answer came. They reached the rocks by the bridge; they searched them on every side, but without success. Then, turning back, and hastily retracing their steps up the stream, again, they called aloud, "Blanche! Antony! Pierre! Aline!" But echo alone replied, mockingly repeating the loved names.

Yet again they shouted; and a little voice was heard in reply, "Here, Philip; here, Paul."

The sound sent a thrill of joy to their hearts, and they hastened toward it, and, on turning the angle of a huge rock, came upon the three little ones, busily engaged in building houses of pebbles and bits of bark, and ornamenting them with wild flowers.

"Blanche? Hugo? Where are they?" gasped Paul and Philip, both at once, as one eager glance told them they were not there.

"Blanche and Hugo? We don't know; they did not come with us," said Antony, looking up from his work. "We left them sitting on a rock by the bridge. Are they not there now?"

"No, no; the rocks are quite deserted now," replied

Philip, in a tone of keen distress. "Oh, children, don't you know where they are?"

"No," said Aline. "What's the matter?"

"Perhaps Blanche went home," said Pierre.

Philip and Paul caught at the suggestion as a drowning man would catch at a straw. "Yes, yes," they said; "that may be. Come, let us go now—at once—and see if she is there."

The little ones, though far from comprehending the terrible fears that oppressed Paul and Philip, yet reading in their faces alarm and distress on account of the disappearance of Blanche and Hugo, immediately dropped their play, and went with them. As speedily as possible the boys climbed the ascent, moving silently along, with hearts throbbing between hope and fear, kindly assisting the younger ones over the difficult places, but speaking no word, either to them or to each other. At length they had reached the cottage door. They paused, and drew back, then, summoning up all their courage, went in.

Madalena looked up from her sewing. "Where are Blanche and Hugo?" she asked, a shade of anxiety crossing her features.

Paul had Aline in his arms, and he set her down, asking, as he did so, "Are they not here, mother? We thought, we hoped, they might have come on before us."

"Here?" she cried, with an expression of wild alarm on her usually calm, patient face; for the remembrance of Ursula's dark, malicious looks and words—particularly those directed at Blanche—flashed upon her, filling her with fear for the fate of her children. "Here? No, no! they are not here. I have not seen them since

they went away with you. Paul, Paul, where is your sister? Where is my darling baby boy?"

"Mother," gasped the poor boy, staggering back against the wall, sick and faint with a horrible fear, "I don't know—I cannot tell; they are gone, but I know not where. We left my sister sitting upon a rock near the bridge, with Hugo in her arms; we went up the rocks to gather flowers, and when we returned they were gone. We searched for them, but could not find them. Then we thought they might have come home, and——"

His voice failed him, and bitter, choking sobs came instead of words.

Madalena sat for a moment as if turned to stone; then started up, saying, "They may yet be found!" and rushed from the house, followed by all the others. Down the steep descent she ran, calling wildly upon her lost darlings; but only mocking echo answered her despairing cries. Vainly she searched every spot where it seemed possible they might have gone, looked behind every rock, into every little glen and hollow, and glanced over the edge of each precipice, shuddering with the fear that she might see their mangled remains lying at the bottom. Alas, not a trace of them could be found! they were gone, utterly gone, and who could tell how or whither? Alas, alas, but too well might the heart-broken mother conjecture who had robbed her of her darlings!* and, bowed almost to the earth with a grief "bitterer than the wail above the dead," she at length gave up the fruitless search, and went back to her desolated home, followed by the weeping children.

* See Appendix, Note D.

Ursula stood on the brow of the hill as they passed, and with a malicious leer cried out to them, "Aha! it has come at last, then! You may look long and well, but you'll not find them, for they're with those that know how to keep what they take."

Philip, already almost distracted with grief, rushed frantically away from the sound of her voice, and, seeking a retired spot behind the cottage, he threw himself upon the ground, groaning and weeping in sore distress; for Blanche, his adopted sister, was to him the dearest of all earthly beings, and he knew not how to bear his loss, or the thought of what she might be made to suffer.

Madalena's eyes were tearless; but, oh, the heart-breaking anguish in her face as she staggered into the house and sank down upon a seat, with her remaining children weeping and sobbing around her! Tears were streaming fast down Barbara's withered cheeks, and her aged frame was bowed with grief, and for some moments she spoke not, and nothing was heard in the room but sounds of woe; but at length, lifting her eyes to her daughter's face and noticing the stony look of her wan features, she went to her, and, gently taking her hand in hers, "Madalena," she said, "Madalena, what saith the Lord our God? 'Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?'"

It was a word in season. The poor, bereaved mother bowed her head upon her hands, and blessed tears came to the relief of her almost-bursting heart. Then Barbara, kneeling by her side, besought Him to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, to be with and protect and preserve the little helpless lambs, though now in the very jaws of the wolf.

"He can do it, dear daughter," she said, folding her arms about Madalena's waist and drawing the poor, aching head down upon her bosom, "for he is able to save to the uttermost; nor will he forsake our little Blanche, who has put her trust in him; for does he not say to each one of his own, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'?"

"But, oh, what may she not be called to endure at their hands! for 'the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel,'" groaned the poor mother; "and my baby, my baby boy!—too young yet to discern between good and evil—oh! is he to be brought up in an idolatrous faith? Mother, mother, how can I endure the thought?"

"Trust him," replied Barbara, softly,—“trust them both with the Lord, who has said, 'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.'”

CHAPTER XIX.

"If only thou art mine—
Though, like the ivy torn from parent tree,
My earthly ties are sever'd, yet round thee
My arms secure I twine."

AND where were Blanche and her baby brother? Paul and Philip having gone up the heights in search of flowers, and the little ones wandering, in their play, farther and farther up the stream, the two were soon left entirely alone. Blanche's mind was full of what Philip had been telling her, and as Hugo was in a

quiet mood, sitting in her lap and looking about him, not requiring any exertion on her part to keep him amused, she soon became quite absorbed in her own sad thoughts. He presently laid his head down upon her breast and fell asleep. She drew her arm more closely about him, pressed a loving kiss on his beautiful, fair brow, and fell to musing again, her eyes upon the rushing waters, and her thoughts dwelling upon the accounts of former massacres which she had heard so often from her parents and grandmother, especially that one which had occurred when she herself was a babe like Hugo, and upon the danger that similar scenes were about to be re-enacted in the valleys. Poor child! a nearer peril threatened her; yet she little suspected it.

Over the top of a rock, not many paces distant, a head was cautiously peeping, and a pair of piercing black eyes were leveled at the spot where she was seated.

"Look, Gasparo; think you not we may venture now with safety?" asked the owner, in an undertone. "She is quite alone, and entirely absorbed in her meditations."

Then another pair of eyes were stealthily brought to bear upon Blanche, and the answer came, accompanied by an oath, "Yes, Cesario, we will venture; my limbs are cramped with crouching so long in this cursed place. Bring the cloak; you will throw it over her head, and I will catch her up in my arms and bear her to the carriage. But tread lightly, lest she hear our approach and give the alarm. Some of the banditti may be lurking near enough to be summoned by the boys to their aid."

"Our Lady forbid!" exclaimed the first speaker; "for, though we are armed, they are said to be bullet-proof, their compact with the devil making them quite invulnerable."

"Haste, then, and be cautious," said the other; and softly they stole from their hiding-place and drew near the unconscious Blanche, the roar of the torrent preventing her from hearing the sound of their footsteps. Her eyes were still upon the stream—her thoughts far away—when suddenly a thick, dark covering was thrown over her head, and at the same instant she felt herself lifted from the ground and borne swiftly along in a pair of strong arms. Well-nigh smothered, and terribly frightened, she became unconscious. How long she remained so she knew not; but, when her senses began to return, she felt that she was still in rapid motion, and a sense of suffocation caused her to make a desperate effort to throw off the covering which was still held down over head and face.

"Let her have a little more air, Cesario," she heard a man's voice say, close at her side, "or she will be quite smothered; and it was not a corpse the signora wished us to bring her."

"True, Gasparo; but she is not to see where we are taking her," replied another masculine voice; and the covering was slightly raised, but still held firmly in its place.

It was some moments ere the little girl could quite collect her scattered senses and assure herself that it was not a horrible nightmare, but, alas, a still more horrible reality that oppressed her. "Where am I? oh! where am I?" she exclaimed, making another violent but fruitless effort to free herself from the suffocating covering.

"In Madame Borelli's carriage, safe on your way to a place where all will go well with you if you don't show yourself an obstinate heretic," replied Cesario, giving her a little more air, but still holding the cloak over her in a way to prevent her effectually from seeing anything.

A bitter sob burst from Blanche's bosom at these words. She knew now that it was no dream, but a terrible reality, and that she was indeed in the hands of the deadly enemies of her faith and people; and a sudden recollection came to her of how it had all happened. But "where was Hugo? oh, what had they done with him?" she asked herself, in terror at finding that he had been torn from her arms. Had they thrown him into the stream, or dashed out his brains against the rocks, as had been done to many another helpless Vaudois infant? The thought was agony, for dearly she loved that baby brother. But the next words of her captors relieved her of that one drop in her cup of anguish.

"How the boy sleeps!" said one. "A fine fellow he is, too. What a pity it would have been to have him grow up among those barbets and believe all their heretical doctrines!"

"Yes; but we've saved him from that," replied the other; "the signora will have him trained up in the true faith."

Then they called to the driver to quicken his speed, and the carriage rolled on more and more rapidly, bearing the poor little ones every moment farther and farther from home and kindred.

Ages of misery seemed to pass over Blanche in the

hour consumed in this rapid drive, for her heart was torn with anguish at the thought of what her parents, her grandmother, and her brothers and sister—to all of whom both she and Hugo were so dear—must endure upon the discovery that they were missing; and to that was added physical suffering and the overwhelming dread and fear of what might be in store for that darling baby brother and herself. She knew not in what direction they were traveling, or how far they had gone. They seemed to be winding about among the hills; the carriage had turned many times; but at length, as it did so once more, Cesario threw the cloak from her face and lifted her up, and she saw that it was passing under a lofty gateway, leading into a broad avenue of chestnut-trees, and the next instant it drew up in front of a lordly dwelling, and Cesario, again taking her in his arms, sprang out, followed by Gasparo with Hugo, and, carrying her up several broad stone steps, set her down in the midst of a wide hall, with marble-paved floor and lofty ceiling, a far grander place than she had ever been in before. But for that she cared nothing; her one, agonizing thought was that she and Hugo were prisoners, and eagerly she looked up into the faces of their captors, to discern whether an appeal to their compassion would be altogether hopeless. Alas, she feared it would indeed, as anxiously she scanned each dark, forbidding countenance; yet she must make an effort; and, falling upon her knees before them, she clasped her hands together, and, with tears streaming down her cheeks, besought them to restore Hugo and herself to their home.

“Oh, take us back!” she begged. “My mother will be heart-broken when she finds that we are stolen from

her. Take us back, kind sirs, and God will reward you for it."

"No, no, pretty one," replied Gasparo, patting her cheek. "It has cost quite too much time and trouble to get you here for us to think of taking you back. You must even make up your mind to stay here, give up your heresies, and become a true daughter of the church; and then you will be far better off than ever you could have been with your barbet parents."

Cesario answered her still more roughly. "Come, come; we will none of that," he said. "Up, and dry your eyes. You may yet live to thank the Virgin and the saints for our success to-day; for if you act wisely it will make a great lady of you."

With a fresh burst of tears and a bitter, despairing sob, the poor child rose to her feet again; and little Hugo, whom Gasparo still held, waking at that moment, and bursting into a piteous cry at sight of the strange, forbidding face above him, she held out her arms, begging that he might be given to her.

"Take him, and welcome," said the man, complying with her request. "My arms ache now with holding him so long, though he's but a light burden; but it is a new business to me, playing the part of nurse."

All this had occupied but a moment; and now a young boy in the dress of a page, drawing near, asked, "Will you take them to the signora?"

"Yes," replied Gasparo. "It was her ladyship's order that they should be taken immediately to her presence on our return with them."

"Then follow me," said the page, leading the way through a spacious ante-room into a still larger and very handsomely furnished apartment, where, in a

velvet-cushioned arm-chair, sat a richly-dressed lady, a little past the heyday of youth, but still fair and blooming; and on a lower seat, by her side, a beautiful young girl,—both working busily upon a piece of embroidery which, as Blanche afterward learned, was intended for the adornment of the altar in their chapel.

The elder lady looked up as they entered, and, putting aside her work, turned toward them with a pleased smile.

“Ah, my good Gasparo and Cesario, so you have been successful at last, and have brought me the Vaudois children of whom I have heard so much!” she said. “Bring them near, that I may look at them. Yes; they are indeed very beautiful! See, Veronica, are they not lovely?” And she took Blanche’s hand, and drew her toward her.

But the child fell on her knees before the lady, and, weeping bitterly, cried, “Ah, madame, have pity on us, and send us back to our home! My heart is breaking, and my poor mother’s heart will break with grief when she finds that we are gone. Ah, madame, have pity, have pity on a poor child who has never offended you or done you wrong! have pity on my poor mother, robbed of her little daughter and her darling baby boy!”

“Nay, my child; I am not willing to send you back; for your beauty charms me, and I wish to adopt you for my own,” replied the lady, passing her hand caressingly over Blanche’s hair. “Your mother has several other children, while I have none; and little or nothing to support them on, while I have abundance. And, besides, I am resolved to save you from your heresies and bring you up in the true faith, thus doing

a good work, a great kindness to you, and adding to my stock of merit, which I fear is now rather small,—eh, Veronica?” And she looked at her companion with a smile.

“We cannot do too many good works, madame,” replied the young girl, gravely; “for Father Ignatius says, if we do more than enough to secure our own salvation, the overplus will be added to that store from which the church draws the indulgences she grants.”

“Ah, madame, I am a Vaudois, and can never be anything else,” said Blanche; “and my mother loves us none the less because she has other children to share her affection; nor can it be right to take us from her, since we were given to her by God himself. Ah, madame, have you no pity for my mother’s sore distress? Think, if God had given children to you, and others had carried them away, how your heart would be torn with anguish; and, oh, madame, do to my poor mother as you would have her do to you.”

“I am sorry for your distress, but it will soon pass away,” replied the lady. “Childish sorrows are never lasting; and I will treat you very kindly, if you are good. As for your mother, her loss is no greater than if she had seen the grave close over you two.”

Alas! Blanche well knew that losing them in this way would be a far, far worse bereavement to her mother than their death could ever have been; but, seeing that prayers and entreaties were vain, she ceased to offer them, and, rising to her feet, stood there with her head bowed upon her breast, pressing her baby brother closer in her arms, and weeping over him in an utter abandonment of grief and despair.

Gasparo and Cesario were now dismissed, with a

liberal reward, and a maid-servant, summoned by the page, was directed to lead the children away to the apartments already prepared for their reception. The room to which Fanehette, the maid, now led the weeping Blanche, was luxurious indeed, compared to the best Hubert's cottage could boast; yet to the sad heart of the little girl it seemed far less attractive. The one, though poor and humble, was her own beloved home; the other, with all its luxury, but a gilded prison.

The maid seemed disposed to treat the little strangers kindly, coaxed Hugo to come to her, offering him sweetmeats as a bribe, gave Blanche a comfortable seat, and, stroking her hair, bade her not cry, for she would soon be very happy there.

Blanche shook her head in hopeless sorrow, and again the tears streamed from her eyes and bitter sobs burst from her bosom.

"Ah, you are both hungry and weary, I dare say," said Fanehette, compassionately; "but you shall have a nice little supper presently, and then go to rest upon a softer couch than ever you slept on before."

A small table was soon set out in the room and covered with delicate and tempting viands; but grief and despair had quite taken away Blanche's appetite, and all Fanehette's entreaties could not induce her to swallow a single mouthful. But Hugo, too young to know what had befallen him, ate heartily, and soon afterward fell fast asleep in his sister's arms.

Then Fanehette brought out a little night-dress of beautiful, fine material, and, while assisting Blanche to put it on her baby brother, said, "Madame had once a little one, scarcely older than this when she d'ed, and she never had another; and now her husband is dead

also, and she says she will never marry again; but she wants children to inherit her wealth, and, hearing how beautiful you and this baby were, she determined to get possession of you and adopt you as her own. And you may think yourselves very fortunate; for madame will be very kind and indulgent, if only you are not obstinate in clinging to your heresies."

Blanche made no reply, but tears chased each other fast down her pale cheeks, as Fanchette rose and led the way to a pretty bed in an adjoining room, where she bade her lay her baby brother down, adding, "You are to sleep beside him, and had better go to bed at once, I think; for you look quite worn out. I will provide you also with a night-dress; for madame, having obtained such a description of you as gave us a very correct idea of your size, had a number of garments made up ready for your use."

Blanche thanked her, and began to prepare to follow her advice. Kneeling down by the bedside, she offered up her evening prayer; and as she thus drew near to Him who is everywhere present, and from whom nothing can separate his people, a ray of comfort stole into her sad heart; she remembered that she was not alone in the midst of her foes, for had he not said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!" "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!" Ah, yes, he was with her, and nothing could befall her without his will,—the will of Him who loved her better than even her mother did; and he would be with that dear mother also, in her sore bereavement, fulfilling to her his own gracious promise, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." And, having committed herself and all her loved ones to his faith-

ful, loving care, the little girl laid her head upon her pillow, and, with her arms about her baby brother, soon fell asleep.

Fanchette had watched her stealthily all the time.

"So that's the way the heretics pray," she said to herself. "She didn't tell her beads—indeed, I see she has none to tell—and she never crossed herself once. I wonder how many Paters and Aves she said, and if she invoked the aid of any of the saints. I must ask her to-morrow, and try to teach her to pray like a good Catholic. I noticed she didn't bow as she passed the image of the Virgin and Child, in the hall below; nor has she once looked toward the crucifix yonder." And Fanchette crossed herself, and bowed low, as she glanced toward it, concluding her soliloquy with a sigh, a mournful shake of the head, and the words, spoken half aloud, "Ah, I'm afraid she's a sad heretic, in spite of her sweet face!"

A step startled her, and, turning, she found Madame Borelli close at her side.

"Ah, my good Fanchette, so you have got them to bed," whispered the lady. "They are very beautiful, are they not? I am much pleased with my acquisition."

"Yes, madame, they are lovely to look at," replied the maid, "but the girl, I fear, is a sad heretic." And she went on to give her reasons for thinking so.

"Ah, well, that was to be expected in the child of heretic parents, my good Fanchette," replied the lady; "but we will soon cure her of that. I do not believe we shall have very much trouble with her, either, for she looks gentle and yielding," she added, gazing at the little ones with a slight sigh; for it would have

needed a hard heart indeed to be able to look without an emotion of pity upon Blanche's fair young face, so sweet, and yet so sad even in sleep. Her pillow was wet with tears, and they were trembling on her long, dark lashes still.

"I think I can bring forward some strong arguments to convince her of her errors," continued Madame Borelli; "and I must have a talk with her to-morrow. Bring them both to me at ten in the morning, Fanchette."

Blanche woke at an early hour the next morning, and, starting up in the bed, gazed about her for a moment with a feeling of utter bewilderment; but the next instant memory brought back the whole dreadful truth, and, sinking down upon her pillow again, she buried her face in it, and wept tears of bitter, heart-breaking sorrow; looking back to her lost home and kindred with unutterable regret and longing, and forward to the trials apparently in store for her with unspeakable terror and dismay. A violent and painful death was the least evil she dared to expect, and she shrank from it with horror, but still more from probable torture, lest her fortitude should give way under prolonged suffering, and she be left to deny the Lord that bought her with his own precious blood. Her little brother lay sweetly sleeping by her side, Fanchette's deep breathing could be heard from the next room, and no eye but God's was there to look upon her anguish. For a time it was fearful; then, as its violence abated, she began again to hear the whispers of that love from which nothing could ever separate her.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee," it said; "be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen

thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "The Lord will give grace and glory." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

With a calming, soothing power, the sweet words stole into her heart, and, rising, she knelt and poured out her prayer before him, beseeching him to fulfill these gracious promises to her, giving her strength to glorify him even in the fires.

She remained long upon her knees—it was so sweet and comforting thus to draw near unto God; and it was thus she was still engaged when Fanchette entered.

"You should kneel yonder, child, before the image of our blessed Lord," she said, pointing to the crucifix. "Have you not been taught to do so?"

"No," replied Blanche, with gentle firmness, though her pale cheek grew still paler. "He himself has said, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.'"

"But we are worshiping him when we kneel before the crucifix," said Fanchette; "for it is the Lord himself who hangs there." And she bowed before it, and crossed herself several times.

"No, Fanchette; it is but a piece of marble graven by some man; and God's commandment is, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.'"

Fanchette looked at her in unfeigned surprise. "See," she said, "what a false religion is yours! You may well thank the Virgin and the saints that you have at length been brought to a house where you will

be taught the true faith. But come; we will talk no more about it at present; I will now help you to dress. See, I have brought you much finer and prettier clothes than those you have been accustomed to wear."

The garments which she displayed as she spoke were far richer and more costly than any Blanche had ever worn; but the child turned from them, and begged, even with tears; to be permitted to wear the old, for she clung to them as the last vestige of her own dear home; but Fanchette, shaking her head, said, "No, madame had ordered it otherwise," and Blanche submitted, with a heavy sigh.

Hugo, too, was richly dressed, and a plentiful meal was set before them. Fanchette did all she could for their comfort and happiness, soothing Hugo with tender caresses when he cried for his absent mother, and exerting herself in every way for the amusement of both.

When the hour appointed by Madame Borelli arrived, Fanchette conducted the children to her presence. She sat in the same room in which Blanche had first seen her; and the young maiden Veronica was again at her side. She received the little ones kindly, expressed herself much pleased with the change better dress had made in their appearance, kissed Blanche's cheek and made her sit down on a velvet cushion at her feet, and, taking the babe upon her lap, caressed and fondled him as if he had been her own.

"What are your names, my dear?" she asked, turning to the little girl.

"Blanche and Hugo Romano," replied the child, the tears starting to her eyes at the remembrance of the dear parents from whom she derived that name.

"Romano," repeated the lady; "a good name enough,

but Borelli is better, I think; and for that you shall exchange it if you are well-behaved children and will become good Catholics. But do you not know, Blanche, that you should bow and cross yourself with all reverence and humility whenever you pass the image of the Holy Virgin? and that you should kneel before the crucifix to offer up your morning and evening devotions?"

Blanche trembled, while listening to these questions, and her heart went up in silent prayer to God for grace and strength to make a bold and fearless confession of her faith. Her prayer was granted.

"Madame," she said, with modest firmness, "God has forbidden us to make unto ourselves graven images, or to bow down to them, or worship them."

"Who told you that?" asked the lady, with some displeasure.

"My parents, and my pastor, madame," replied Blanche, respectfully; "and, more than that, I have read it for myself in God's own holy word."

"The heretic Bible!" she exclaimed. "It is a bad book, full of errors, Father Ignatius tells me; and even the Romish Bible, he says, is a dangerous book in the hands of the laity, who cannot understand it aright except as the church explains it."

"Madame," replied the child, "the Lord Jesus himself said, 'Search the Scriptures;' and most of the Bible is so plain and simple that even a little child, such as I, can understand it very easily; and, besides, God has promised his Holy Spirit to teach us the true meaning, if we ask him for it."

The lady's face flushed. "I fear you are indeed an obstinate heretic," she said. "Tell me; do you never

address your prayers to the Holy Virgin, or to the saints?"

"No, madame; because God commands, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'"

"And do you never ask the Virgin or the saints to intercede for you, that you may be forgiven?"

"No, madame; for we are told, 'There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.'"

"Ah, the Vaudois, then, think themselves good enough to approach God in their own name and plead their own cause?"

"No, madame; not in their own name, but in that of the one mediator between God and man. 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' says the Apostle John; and our Lord himself said, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'"

"And do you also deny the duty of confession to the priest?"

"I do, madame; I confess to none but God; for who can forgive sins but God only?"

"The church teaches that God has given the power of absolution to the priests," said the lady. "This confessing to God only, is one of the heresies you will now have to abjure. You must now learn to confess to the priest, to bow to the image of the Blessed Virgin and the pictures of the saints, and to kneel before the crucifix to perform your devotions."

Blanche grew very pale, and trembled visibly; but she made no reply.

"Suppose, madame, you ask her what she thinks of the mass," suggested Veronica, in a whisper.

"Did you ever attend mass?" asked the lady, acting upon the suggestion; "and do you believe that when the priest blesses the bread and wine they become the true body and blood, the human soul and the divinity, of Jesus Christ, and should be adored as such?"

The child was silent for a moment; for the trembling little heart was again asking earnestly for strength to make a good profession before those witnesses. Then, raising her soft, dark eyes to the face of her interrogator, she replied, "No, madame; I believe they are what they were before—simple bread and wine, and that to adore and worship them would be sinful idolatry."

A burst of indignation, from all present, followed this bold avowal; and with a flush upon her cheek, and an angry gleam in her eye, Madame Borelli bade Fanchette take the young heretics back to their room, adding, "Father Ignatius will be at home again by to-morrow night, and we will see what arguments he can find to convince this obstinate young Lutheran of her errors and bring her into the fold of the true church."

Fanchette obeyed, taking the babe in her arms and carrying him from the room; Blanche following in silence, with a heart filled with sad forebodings, but a peaceful, approving conscience, and a humble, child-like confidence and trust in God that he would not leave nor forsake her in the day of her trial.

Fanchette's manner, which had before been kind and friendly, now spoke anger and aversion. She put

Hugo into his sister's arms, as soon as they reached their own apartments, and turned away in sullen silence; and Blanche's only consolation, in the midst of her bitter grief and terrible apprehensions, was in the endearments of her little brother and in holding silent communion with her God. She soothed Hugo to sleep, laid him on the bed, and then, seating herself by the open window, looked out upon the beautiful landscape, trying to recognize its features, and to ascertain from them where she was, and how far from home,—the loved home she might never hope to see again. But, alas! the scene, though very lovely, was strange to her. The near view was of groves of olive and fig trees, vineyards, cornfields, and verdant meadows, sloping down to the waters of a rapidly flowing river,—which she knew was not the Pelice,—while beyond, to the left, and directly before her, were richly-wooded hills and fertile plains, none of which wore a familiar look; but as she turned to the right, where the hills were backed by mountains, an emotion of joy stirred in her heart, causing a slight exclamation of pleasure to escape her lips; for there, towering above them all, was the glittering pinnacle of Monte Viso. It was almost like seeing the face of a friend, and she felt nearly certain that her home lay in that direction, though how far away she could not conjecture. Nor would it have availed her much had she known, for escape seemed hopeless; and, as she gazed, she could but weep, and pray that God would undertake her cause.

Fanchette maintained her sullen silence for a time, but at length, touched by Blanche's gentle manner and the sweet, sad expression of her fair young face, she

relented, and began to talk again in a kindly tone; and after dinner, taking Hugo in her arms, she told Blanche to "come with her, and she would show her some of the splendors of her new home."

"Would madame be quite willing?" asked Blanche, hanging back.

"Quite," replied Fanchette, moving on; and Blanche followed through one spacious apartment after another, gazing with childish interest upon the costly furniture, and the fine paintings which adorned the walls.

They were on the ground floor of the building, when Fanchette, pushing open a door at the end of a long passage, said, in an undertone, "This is the chapel; and it is much handsomer than anything you have seen yet." And, crossing herself, she stepped in, Blanche following, and looking up with admiration at the arched and beautifully sculptured ceiling, but starting back with a shudder as her eye fell upon a large painting above the altar. The subject was the Crucifixion, and it looked startlingly real in the dim uncertain light admitted through the richly-stained windows. The drooping head crowned with thorns, the bleeding side, the hands and feet nailed to the cross—all were there; while into the countenance the artist had thrown such an expression of intense suffering, mingled with heavenly patience and submission, that it was impossible to look upon it without emotion; and the young Vau-
dois turned away, sick with horror.

But Fanchette did not seem to notice her emotion.

"Come," she said, taking her hand and drawing her onward, "I must show you the paintings; they are called very fine, and, I have been told, cost a great sum of money. See, here is the Blessed Virgin,

with her infant Son in her arms " And again she bowed and crossed herself.

But Blanche turned her head away, and scarcely once lifted her eyes as Fanchette led her round the chapel, pausing every moment before the picture of some saint, and telling wonderful-stories of what they had done and suffered, and what holy lives they had led, what fastings and prayers and penances had attested their sanctity, and how they had thus obtained heaven for themselves and laid up a store of merit for others.

For some time Blanche listened in silence ; but at length she said, " Oh, no, good Fanchette ; that cannot be ; for we are told in God's own holy word, ' There is none that doeth good ; no, not one.' ' By grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast.' "

" Ah, you are indeed an obstinate heretic, if you will not believe in the goodness of the saints ! " exclaimed Fanchette, angrily. " Come ; you shall no longer pollute the sanctuary by your unholy presence. We will return to our rooms ; and to-morrow Father Ignatius will bring you to reason. "

The next morning Blanche was summoned to the presence of Madame Borelli, whom she found reclining upon a couch in her dressing-room. She greeted the little girl kindly, and, pointing to a stool by her side, bade her sit down and read aloud from a book which she placed in her hands. It was a volume of legends of the Popish saints, full of marvelous stories of the wonderful miracles wrought by them or in their favor, not one word of which did Blanche believe, though she read them in a grave, quiet tone, and with

as unmoved a countenance as if they had been sober truths, instead of the most absurd fabrications, well calculated to provoke a smile from any sensible reader not wholly blinded by superstition. But Blanche was far too sad for mirth, and indeed much of the time merely repeated the words without at all taking in the meaning of what she read; for her thoughts were far away with the dear ones from whom she had been so cruelly separated.

"There! that will do, my dear," Madame Borelli said, at length. "Are you not now convinced that ours is the true faith, and yours a false religion?"

"No, madame; my faith in my religion, and the religion of my fathers and of the Bible, has not been at all shaken," replied the little girl.

"What strange obstinacy!" exclaimed the lady, in a tone of great vexation. "Blanche, you *must* give up your heresies. I must have you for my daughter; but I cannot unless you become a good Catholic. Think what you will lose by clinging to your heretical faith—what you will gain by giving it up and embracing the true. Come to this window. Look at all these broad lands, and know that, if I adopt you and Hugo, they will belong to you two at my death."

Blanche obeyed, gazing out upon the beautiful grounds, but said not a word.

Madame Borelli rose, and opened her jewel-case. "Look at these, Blanche," she said: "they are very costly. See how the gems sparkle. Here are pearls and diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and many other kinds of precious stones: look at these rings, chains, bracelets, and necklaces of heavy gold: and all these will one day be yours, if you will but abjure your vile

heresies. Nor shall you wait for them all until my death. Give up your heresies, and I will now bestow upon you this diamond ring and pin, and this beautiful gold chain; you shall wear them every day, and be dressed in robes of costly silk, such as these." And, as she spoke, she opened a chest, and, drawing from it various rich and costly fabrics, spread them out upon the bed, so as to display them to the best advantage. "Ah, how beautiful you will look when arrayed in these, my pretty one!" she said, stroking Blanche's hair caressingly; "for you are lovely enough for a princess. Veronica," she exclaimed, as, just at that moment, the latter entered the room, "bring me that embroidered robe, the mantle, and the hat and plumes I had prepared for my adopted daughter, and let us see how they will become this child."

The young girl quickly brought the desired articles from the next room, and assisted her mistress to array Blanche in them. They then bade her look at herself in the mirror.

The child obeyed, and a flush of gratified vanity rose to her cheek, as she caught sight of the lovely face and form reflected there, and listened to the flattering remarks from Madame Borelli and Veronica. But it was only for a moment; and the next her heart went up in silent prayer for strength to resist temptation, for the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and for grace to "set her affections on things above, not on things on the earth."

"The carriage is at the door, madame," said Veronica, glancing from the window.

"Yes," replied her mistress; "bring me my bonnet

and mantle. Blanche, you and I will take a drive about the grounds."

Had Blanche been only a visitor, who might return when she would to her parents and friends, a drive in Madame Borelli's carriage would have seemed a pleasant thing; but, prisoner as she was, her heart was too sad, and she had too great reason for apprehension, to find much enjoyment in anything. No smile lighted up her expressive countenance during the ride; and though Madame Borelli exerted herself for her amusement, and was careful to point out all the beauties of the place, she scarcely received a word in reply, except a subdued "Yes, madame," or "No, madame;" nor could she help seeing that every now and then the little hand was lifted to brush away a tear from the wan cheek. But she would not notice it, and, on their return to the house, again took Blanche to her dressing-room, again spread before her the beautiful clothing and rich ornaments, and asked, once more, "Will you not now abjure your heresies? Would you not enjoy wearing these, and riding out every day in my carriage?"

"I would far rather be with my mother. Oh, madame, let me go back to her!" cried the little girl, falling on her knees, and clasping her hands in an agony of grief and supplication.

"No, that cannot be," was the cold reply; "it is utterly vain to ask it. And, now, will you answer my question? Are you ready to abjure, and become my adopted daughter?"

"Madame, I cannot give up my faith. I cannot deny my Lord," was the firm, though respectful, reply.

"Foolish child! you have everything to lose by clinging to it, everything to gain by abjuring it," said

Madame Borelli. "If you indulge a hope of escaping, let me assure you it is utterly vain. The walls that surround my grounds are high, the gates always kept locked, and you will be under constant watch and ward. You cannot return to your parents: you are entirely in my power. And suppose you could return to them; what would it avail you? It were but running into the very jaws of death; for the whole race is devoted to destruction. Heard you not of the edict published but a few days since, pronouncing them all guilty of high treason, and condemning them to death and the confiscation of their goods?"

"Yes, madame, I did," replied Blanche, the tears streaming fast down her cheeks; "but I know that our God is almighty, and can save us from our foes, even as he saved Israel of old."

"But you are heretics," she said, "and cannot, therefore, look for his aid and protection. Abjure your heresies, Blanche, and you shall have all that heart can wish. I will love you as my own child; you shall have servants to wait upon you, shall be richly dressed, fare sumptuously every day, and lead such a happy life of ease and pleasure that you will soon cease to pine for your old home in your father's poor hut: but refuse to become a good Catholic, and you will be made to undergo terrible tortures, perhaps to pine away for many long years in a dark, loathsome dungeon, and end your life there, or at the stake, and go down to perdition afterward, to spend an awful eternity with the devils in hell."

Blanche shuddered and grew very pale; but, with an effort, she controlled her voice, and answered, in a gentle, patient tone, "Madame, Jesus says, 'He that

loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' And he also says, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Madame, he may see fit to leave me in your power in this world until you have tortured my poor body to death; but after that you have no more that you can do, and I 'shall be forever with the Lord.'"

"Deluded child! obstinate heretic!" exclaimed Madame Borelli; "go back to your own apartments, and remain there until the return of Father Ignatius, when we shall see if his arguments will not have more weight with you than mine; and, in the mean while, I will offer up my poor prayers to the Blessed Virgin that your eyes may be opened to your errors. Go!" And, with a wave of her hand, she dismissed the pale, trembling child, who left her presence almost overwhelmed with terror and despair, yet feebly clinging still to the Almighty arm that upheld her amid the surging waves of those deep waters.

Hugo had been left with Fanchette, and, as Blanche opened the door of their room, with a joyful cry he held out his little arms for her to take him. She sat down with him in her lap, and, clasping him convulsively to her breast, sobbed bitterly upon his neck. It was sweet to have this one loved one left; yet, oh, the bitter anguish of thinking that he was to be trained up in an idolatrous faith, with none to show him the true path to heaven! for she could not hope to be with him long unless she bought the privilege at the fearful price of the denial of her Lord. Such thoughts as these, the remembrance of the sufferings and privations of her

family and people, and the still greater dangers, the still sorer trials, apparently in store for both them and herself, filled the soul of the young Vaudois with unutterable sorrow and distress. Yet, even in the midst of it all, a loving voice sweetly whispered to her trembling heart, "Fear thou not; for *I* am with thee." And again, in answer to her fears for his church, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

Words cannot tell how the timid child dreaded and shrank from the threatened encounter with the priest who acted as chaplain and father-confessor to Madame Borelli and her household. Was it not by the priests, or at their instigation, that her grandfather had been burnt at the stake, her father exiled from home, one uncle sent to the galleys, and another tortured to death? and had they not ever been most active participators in all the terrible massacres, torturings, burnings, and pillagings inflicted, in the name of religion, upon her poor, persecuted people for centuries past? She could not forget these things; and no wonder that her heart died within her as the hour for the dreaded interview drew near. "What," she asked herself, "should she say in defense of her faith? how answer the specious arguments he would bring against it, or the threatenings with which he would denounce her for adhering to it?" How she wished she had a Bible, that she might search out appropriate texts with which to reply to him, and promises to sustain her sinking spirits! but, alas, there was none within her reach. Yet, though separated from all earthly friends and from God's holy word, she knew that he himself was near; and, remembering the Saviour's gracious promise, "But the Com-

forter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you," she lifted up her heart in prayer that he would fulfill it unto her, putting thoughts into her mind and words into her mouth when called to the presence of the priest, that thus she might be enabled to witness a good confession for him, her Lord and Master; and, in answer to her prayer, these words of Jesus to his disciples were brought sweetly home to her heart, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Hugo had been put to bed for the night, and Blanche was kneeling by the window, watching the sun sinking behind the mountains, sadly thinking that, should she be thrown into a dungeon, as Madame Borelli had threatened, this might be the last time she should look upon that beautiful sight, and lifting up her sinking heart to God for strength to be faithful to the end, when Fanchette, entering the room, said, "Father Ignatius has returned, Blanche, and summons you now to his presence. You must go at once."

Blanche rose to her feet, but, trembling in every limb and gasping for breath, caught at the window-frame for support. Fanchette was kind-hearted by nature, and there was sincere pity in the look with which she regarded the terrified child.

"You have only to give up your heresies and be reconciled to the church, and you will have nothing to fear from Father Ignatius," she said, in a kindly tone

"Do, now, there's a dear child; for, the fact is, I'm growing quite fond of you, and wouldn't like to see you treated with severity."

Blanche only shook her head, while the hot tears streamed down her cheeks. She could not speak; but, tottering to the bed, she stooped over her little brother and pressed one kiss of passionate love upon his dimpled cheek, and, turning away with a heart-breaking sob, followed Fanchette from the room.

They traversed the upper hall, passed through an ante-room, and, pausing before the door of an inner chamber, Fanchette knocked. A stern, deep voice answered, "Come in." Fanchette opened the door, and, as Blanche entered, closed it behind her, and went away.

Blanche raised her head, and glanced about her. The room was tolerably large, and handsomely furnished; a table covered with books and papers stood in the middle of the floor, and beside it was an arm-chair, in which sat the only occupant of the room, a tall, dark, stern-featured man, with black hair and piercing black eyes. These were fixed upon her with a steady gaze.

"Draw near, and let me speak to you," he said, with an imperious gesture; and Blanche obeyed. "So you are the little heretic so lately introduced into this Christian household, and whom it must now be my task to instruct in the true faith and gather into the fold of the church," he said, in stern accents. "Do you know that there is but one true church? and that none who are without her pale can be saved?"

"I know, sir," replied Blanche, lifting her meek eyes to his face, "that there is but one true church, com-

posed of all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth ; for whom he has satisfied the curse of the law by his sufferings and death in their stead, and who have been washed from the guilt and pollution of their sins in his precious blood ; and that they, and they only, can be saved ; because the Bible says of Christ, ' Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' "

" There is but one—the holy Catholic Church, of which his holiness, the Roman Pontiff, is head ; and there can be no salvation without her pale," he answered ; " and I hear that you, in your ignorance, folly, and presumption, have dared to question and deny many of her teachings, and to refuse obedience to many of her requirements. This must be so no longer. The church has power to compel obedience to her commands, and she will use it. I might, then, proceed at once to force ; but in consideration of your misfortune in having had your birth and education among heretics, I will condescend first to try argument and persuasion ; but understand that, if they are not effectual, other means will be used. You deny the doctrine of the real presence in the Host ; that is, you say that after the priest has consecrated the sacred elements of bread and wine they remain as before, simply bread and wine ; whereas the church teaches that they are changed into the body and blood, the human soul and the divinity, of Jesus Christ ; and in support of that teaching we have the Lord's own words, ' This,' referring to the bread he had just blessed, '*is my body* : ' and, again, in reference to the wine, when he had blessed it, ' This is my blood of the new testament ; '

etc What say you to that ? can you deny that Jesus Christ himself used those very words?"

"No, sir," replied Blanche, whose heart had been going up in silent prayer for the promised teachings of the Spirit. "I do not deny it. But Christ also says, 'I am the way;' and, again, 'I am the door;' and no one thinks he means his words to be taken in the literal sense. And I cannot believe in the sacrifice of the mass, because the Bible says, 'We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, *once for all.*' . . . 'This man, after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.' . . . 'For by *one* offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.'"

"You must believe as the church teaches," said the priest, sternly. "The Bible is a dangerous book for the unlearned and ignorant, such as you, who wrest Scripture to their own destruction. I am told that you also refuse to come to the confessional, asserting your disbelief in priestly absolution, and saying that God alone can forgive sins; though we are plainly told, 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained;' and though the command is, 'Confess your faults one to another.'"

"One to another, sir," said Blanche; "but there is nothing said about a priest. And the apostles, to whom Christ spoke those words, were inspired by the Holy Spirit, by whose power alone they always professed to act. And the Bible says, 'Who can forgive sins but God only?' and, again, 'To the *Lord our God* belong mercies and forgivenesses.'"

"Hush!" he said, sternly. "You are giving abun-

dant proof that the Bible is indeed a dangerous book in the hands of one so young and ignorant. I hear that you also deny the efficacy of good works, of prayers for the dead, and of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the saints."

"Sir," said Blanche, "what can works avail us? for the Bible says, 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' 'There is none that doeth good; no, not one.' 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.' And can it be right to pray for the dead, when the Bible teaches that death has fixed their state for eternity? 'The redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth *forever*.' 'Now is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation.' And why should I pray to the Virgin and the saints? for, if they are in heaven and I upon earth, they cannot hear me. They are good and holy now, because Jesus has washed them from their sins in his precious blood; but they cannot hear nor help me, and it were sinful idolatry to worship them; for our Lord himself says, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;' and, again, 'I will not give my glory to another.' And the angel would not be worshiped by St. John, nor St. Peter by Cornelius."

"Peace!" he said. "I command you to abjure your vile heresies on the spot. You must bow to the images and pictures of the Virgin and the saints wherever you see them; you must address your prayers to them—must attend chapel, make the sign of the cross upon your forehead with holy water, and adore the Host when elevated in my hands. And now begin at once by kneeling down before yonder crucifix and adoring it."

"Sir," replied Blanche, growing deadly pale, "I cannot; for God has strictly commanded, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them.'"

"Obstinate heretic!" he cried, furiously; "do you still refuse to be convinced? Do you refuse to obey? I have other and more potent arguments at hand,—other means by which to compel obedience." And, taking up a scourge that lay concealed among the papers on the table, he shook it menacingly at her; then, pushing her before him till he brought her in front of the image, he brandished the whip over her head, asking, "Will you now recant your vile heresies? Will you kneel and adore this sacred symbol, as I command you?"

"Lord, help me!" cried Blanche, with pale and trembling lips, clasping her hands together and raising her eyes to heaven, while her whole frame shook with terror.

"Down on your knees, this instant!" roared the priest; "down on your knees, or I'll scourge you till there's no more breath left in your body!"

"I will worship God—God only," replied Blanche.

"We will see!" said the priest; and the whip descended on the thinly-covered shoulders of the child with a force that wrung from her a cry of anguish; and again and again the blow was repeated, till the blood streamed from the torn flesh, and the poor little sufferer sank insensible upon the floor.

CHAPTER XX.

"When I'm afraid, I'll trust in thee;
In God I'll praise his word;
I will not fear what flesh can do,
My trust is in the Lord."

PSALM xxxvi. 2.

WHEN consciousness returned to Blanche, she found herself lying upon the bed in the room which was called hers, while Fanchette leaned over her, gently dressing her wounds. The child groaned.

"Poor thing! you are in pain," said Fanchette; "but why would you be so obstinate? why would you not obey his reverence? I would not be a heretic only to suffer like this."

"But my Saviour bore much more for me," said Blanche, "and I love him; and, rather than deny or disobey him, I will suffer death itself, if he gives me strength."

"I don't understand it," murmured Fanchette, as she moved away from the bedside. "It is a pity that all are not good Catholics; it would save a great deal of trouble and pain."

Blanche was indeed in pain, both of body and mind. Her conscience, it is true, was at ease, and she could rejoice and thank God that he had enabled her to witness a good profession, and that she was counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake; yet she trembled and grew sick at heart at the thought of what might still be in reserve for her and for those nearest and

dearest to her. And, oh, how she longed for her mother's presence—for the soft touch of her hand to soothe away the pain of her aching head, her sweet, tender sympathy, her loving caresses! but, alas! she had little hope of ever seeing that beloved mother again on earth: she did not even know that she was yet in the land of the living; for, humanly speaking, the life of no Vaudois was safe, even for a day. But a nearer and dearer Friend was by her side; and, amid all her deep suffering, to her was fulfilled that wonderful promise, so full of amazing love and condescension, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted." The peace of God filled her soul; and, during the weeks of pain she spent upon that bed ere she was again able to rise and move about the room, the light of his countenance, the sense of his love and his presence with her there, even in the midst of his and her enemies, often made her heart to sing for joy and gladness. She was "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" "rejoicing in hope; and patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."

Fanchette, who had a strong natural love for children, was very kind to Hugo, and, in a lesser degree, to Blanche also, whom she vainly strove to hate on account of her "heresies."

The poor child was so sweet-tempered, so gentle, patient, and uncomplaining; and so grateful for any little kindness shown her, that all Fanchette's bigotry and prejudice could not keep her heart closed against her.

Sincerely believing her own faith the true one, and really desiring to promote the welfare, both temporal and spiritual, of her young charges, Fanchette set

herself ardently to work for the conversion of Blanche; but she desisted ere long, finding herself no match for the well-instructed, pious child; and the subject was dropped between them.

While confined to her bed from the effects of the brutal treatment of the priest, Blanche saw no one but her baby brother and Fanchette; but, when able to sit up again and to move feebly about the room, she was one day surprised by a visit from Madame Borelli.

The lady seemed much shocked at the altered appearance of the child, and her manner toward her was gentle and kind.

"I hope you have not suffered so much for nothing, Blanche," she said, "and that you are now ready to abjure your heresies and become a true daughter of the church.

"Hush! I will not hear any reply now," she added, laying her hand on the lips of the little girl, who was about to speak; "but to-morrow morning you must go with me into the chapel, where Father Ignatius will read prayers; and I shall then expect to see proofs of the happy change which I hope is being wrought in you, in answer to our supplications to the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of heaven, on your behalf. Don't, my dear child, don't, I beg of you, give us the pain of inflicting any more suffering upon you." And, without allowing Blanche time for a single word in reply, she walked quickly away.

Poor Blanche, still very weak, sank half fainting into a chair, and, closing her eyes and clasping her thin white hands together, she lifted up her heart in silent prayer for strength to undergo this new trial.

Fanchette looked pityingly at her, and began to urge

her to comply with the wishes of those who had her in their power ; but the child's thoughts seemed far away, and she desisted, wondering at the strength of endurance manifested by one so young, for she could not see the everlasting arms that were underneath and around that feeble little one.

Blanche was very pale and silent all the rest of that day ; but there was no wavering or indecision in look or manner ; the expression of her countenance was calm, clear, and steadfast. She was staying herself upon her God, and trusting in his promise, "I will be with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee."

The same look was on her face still when the next morning she was summoned to accompany Madame Borelli to the chapel. She was so weak as to be compelled to let Fanchette assist her down the great staircase into the hall, where the lady stood giving some directions to a servant.

"You look pale and ill, child, and are trembling, too," she said, as she took Blanche's hand in hers ; "but only be good and submissive, and you have nothing to fear."

So saying, she led her on to the chapel-door. Just within the door-way stood a vessel of so-called holy water. Into this Madame Borelli dipped her fingers, then made the sign of the cross upon her forehead, motioning to Blanche to follow her example.

The little girl shook her head.

"You must," whispered the lady, putting on a look of great displeasure.

Still Blanche, gently but firmly, refused, though she

saw the priest's flashing eye fixed upon her; and Madame Borelli, again dipping her own finger in, herself made the sign upon the little girl's forehead, then dragged her angrily forward to a seat directly in front of the altar. Most of the others were already occupied by the servants and people from the hamlets and cottages in the vicinity,—for it was a Popish neighborhood,—and as soon as Madame Borelli had taken her place, the service began.

Blanche, pale and trembling, cast down her eyes, that she might not see the images and pictures.

“You must cross yourself, and bow, and kneel, as you see me and others do,” whispered Madame Borelli.

But Blanche did not obey, for the prayer the priest was repeating was addressed to the Virgin; and madame, taking hold of her, dragged her down to her knees, and, placing her hand behind her head, thus forced her to bow.

The service lasted for half an hour or more, nearly all the prayers being in Latin, and of the few that Blanche understood, not more than one or two were addressed to God, and she could not, dared not, join in the others. She saw that a fearful storm was gathering for her; but, trusting in a strength not her own, she was enabled to meet it with courage.

Madame Borelli was pale with anger, and, turning away her face as they left the chapel, would neither speak to nor look at her; and scarcely had she regained her room, when she was summoned to a second interview with the priest. He met her with a storm of abuse, accompanied with fearful threats of the vengeance that should fall upon her if she continued obstinately to refuse to submit to the authority of his

church He then told her that she deserved severe punishment for her behavior in the chapel, but that if she would now kneel down and confess to him, and abjure her heresies, it should be passed over with a slight penance: if she did not, condign punishment should be visited upon her.

"Sir," said Blanche, lifting a calm, steady eye to his face, though her pale lips trembled, and her voice quivered with emotion, "my Lord has said, 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him! Also, I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.' And sir, I cannot deny Him who so loved me that he gave his own life a ransom for me, or peril my immortal soul to save this poor, frail, perishing body."

The priest was furious, and again his brutal whip was brought out, and Blanche was beaten till there seemed to be no life left in the poor, lacerated body: then again followed weeks of pain and suffering, borne with the same quiet, patient resignation as before.

At first her weakness and exhaustion were so great that her life seemed to be trembling in the balance, and with joy she thought she might soon walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem,—might soon look upon the face of the Saviour whom, having not seen, she loved. But it was not so to be: her work on earth was not yet done; and, by slow degrees, her strength returned, until at length she was once more able to leave her bed.

"I am glad to see you so much better, little one," said Fanchette, one morning, as she helped her to walk across the room, and seated her in a chair by the window.

"Ah, Fanchette," replied Blanche, while the tears stole silently down her cheeks, "I hoped I was going home. I thought I was almost there; and why should you rejoice to see me growing strong, only to go through it all again?"

"You need not," said Fanchette; "only abjure your heresies, and you shall be treated like a princess."

Blanche shook her head sorrowfully. "No, Fanchette," she said; "I cannot deny my Lord."

"You mean you will not abjure?" said Fanchette. "Then it will be nothing but suffering until you die. Let me tell you what I have heard it whispered they intend to do with you next. In one of the towers of this building—away up at the top—there is a little round room which they call the chamber of penitence: there are no windows; but it is a dead white wall all around, and all the light comes from a small round opening in the center of the ceiling, and it beats down on you with a glare that is almost intolerable. You cannot see out; you can see nothing but the floor under your feet, this dead white wall all around you, and the white, vaulted ceiling above you, with its glaring eye of light. I once angered his reverence greatly, and they put me in there for a week; so that I know the horrors of the place. I thought I should go mad before they let me out.* And this is where they are going to put you

* The idea of the chamber of penitence is not original with me; I have seen a description of it as extant in the Spanish Inquisition in the time of Charles V.

poor, if you do not recant; and they will keep you there till you go mad or die. Come, be advised by me, and abjure at once. Yours is a false religion, and you had better give it up, for it brings you nothing but pain and trouble."

"No," replied Blanche, "I am as certain of the truth of my religion as that I am now living, or that I shall one day die; and if I denied my faith I should speak falsely, and Christ would deny me at that last great day."

"But think of the horrors of the chamber of penitence," said Fanchette; "ah! you will never be able to endure them; for, besides all I have described, they will inflict penances upon you,—make you keep many vigils and fasts; and Father Ignatius and his whip may visit you there too. And you will have to spend many days and nights alone in that horrible place. And think!—you will be separated from your baby brother, whom you love so dearly, and may never see him again."

Blanche had leaned back in her chair while Fanchette spoke, her small, thin hands were clasped tightly together in her lap, her eyes were closed, and down her wan, sunken cheeks the tears streamed like rain, while her pale lips quivered, and a bitter, choking sob burst every now and then from her bosom. For a moment these were her only reply; then, as she grew calmer, "Ah, Fanchette," she said, "it is terrible, *terrible* to have to endure such things—and I could not, in my own strength; but I shall not be alone in the horrible place you have described. my Lord will be with me there, and he has said, 'In me is thine

help,' and the sweet whispers of his love can make his people happy anywhere."

"But dear little Hugo," said Fanchette; "how can you bear to be parted from him?"

Blanche opened her eyes, and they rested with unutterable love upon the baby face at her side; for the little one, just learning to walk, had tottered to her, and now held up his face for a kiss. She gave it: she threw herself on to the floor beside him, clasped him to her heart, and wept over him in bitter anguish at the thought of the impending separation; wept until she seemed ready to faint from exhaustion.

"You cannot give him up?" said Fanchette, as she raised her in her arms, and laid her upon the bed.

"It is bitterer than death," sobbed Blanche; "but, if it is my Father's will, I can. God only knows how I love the darling; but I love Jesus better."

A few days after this, Blanche was, by Madame Borelli's orders, carried to that lady's dressing-room, where she again tried all her arts of flattery, bribery, and persuasion, displaying, as before, the stores of her wardrobe and jewel-case, and promising the little girl magnificent presents, and a life of ease and luxury, if she would but renounce her faith in the religion of the Bible and embrace the idolatrous tenets of the Romish Church. But, finding these unavailing, she next tried threats, giving her a description of the chamber of penitence very similar to Fanchette's, and telling her that, if she continued obstinate, a few days more would see her lodged within its walls.

But, leaning on an Almighty arm, Blanche was firm. He whose she was, and whom she served, "did not suffer her to be tempted above that she was able;

but with the temptation also made a way to escape, that she was able to bear it."

The object of her persecutors being not to kill but to convert her, she was allowed to remain in her comfortable quarters and to have nourishing food for another fortnight. But at the end of that time, her strength being now deemed sufficient to bear the strain, and her resolution to adhere to her faith remaining unchanged, she was consigned to the chamber of penitence, and her fare reduced to a scanty supply of bread and water, the former often dry and mouldy and the latter foul and brackish. She had not been long in her prison-cell ere she felt that its horrors had been by no means exaggerated by either Madame Borelli or Fanchette. Its furniture consisted of a wooden stool and a hard pallet of straw, neither of which could give much rest or ease to her feeble frame, while the interminable glare of the white wall surrounding her made her poor head and eyes ache and burn, the light beating down all day long from the opening above, and being reflected from every side without the least shadow to relieve her tortured vision, so that she was glad when darkness came to shut it out from her sight. And soon she longed intensely to look once more upon the mountains and valleys, the rivers, the meadows, and the forests. Every day, during that fortnight of respite, she had gazed upon them as at what she might never see again; and now she would sometimes shut her eyes and try to dream that the horrible white wall was gone, and that once more she was feasting her vision with the beauties of nature, upon which she had been accustomed to gaze since her earliest infancy. But, alas! the sad reality would still force itself upon her. Closing

her eyes gave but partial relief to them, and her heart still ached with the irrepressible longing for liberty and the pleasant sights and sounds of home, but especially for the loved ones there.

She saw no one except Veronica, who had been constituted her jailer, and who, each night and morning, opened her door, and, setting inside of it the earthen plate and jug which contained the little prisoner's allowance of food and drink, usually turned and went away again without a word, but sometimes delayed a moment to eye the "little heretic" scornfully, and ask, in an icy tone, "if she were yet ready to abjure and become reconciled to Holy Mother Church."

And thus day after day and week after week rolled slowly by, Blanche growing hourly more and more weary and sick of the pent-up atmosphere, the dreadful monotony, the constant solitude, silence, and inactivity to which she was condemned; nothing to do, nothing to hear, nothing to see but the white walls of her cell, which, when the sun shone brightly, almost blinded her with their glare. All these would have seemed enough to endure without the added pangs of hunger and cold and intense longing for home and kindred; yet she must bear them also, for winter had come, and she had neither fire nor warm clothing, and her allowance of food was not only scant in quantity, but often of such quality that she turned from it with loathing till on the very verge of starvation, and her sufferings were so great that at times she feared her reason or her resolution would give way beneath the pressure. But strength was yet given her according to her day, and she was enabled to endure unto the end. **No earthly friend was near to cheer her solitude**

and comfort her, amid her pain, with words of sympathy and love; but she had the presence of that Friend that sticketh closer than a brother; and the sweet whispers of his love, and the sure hope of an eternity of bliss at his right hand, kept her heart from sinking, and sometimes made it sing for joy even in that horrible prison, with nothing to hope for on earth but torture and death. Much of her time was spent in prayer, or in repeating softly to herself, and meditating upon, passages of Scripture with which her memory had been stored from her earliest years. And often she thought of the scenes of those happier days, of the kind and faithful instructions of her parents, and of their love and that of her brothers and sisters to her; and many and fervent were the petitions she offered up for them all, but especially for little Hugo, who, like herself, had fallen into the enemy's hands.

It had been a bitter day—so cold that Madame Borelli and Veronica shivered over roaring fires—while Blanche, in her dreary cell, crouched on her hard pallet of straw and gathered the thin covering closely about her, yet found herself in danger of freezing; her hands and feet were numb with the cold; her teeth chattered, and she shook and shivered as if in an ague-fit. The day had seemed interminably long to the poor, suffering child; but it was at last drawing to a close, and the gathering darkness had brought some relief to her aching eyes, when the cell-door opened, and Veronica stood before her. She had come on the usual errand; yet it seemed that was not all, for, setting down the cup and plate she had brought, she addressed her prisoner.

"I come from Father Ignatius," she said, coldly, "to

ask if you still persist in your obstinate refusal to repent and become reconciled to the church?"

"My faith still remains the same it has ever been," replied Blanche, meekly; "and, God helping me, I will keep it to the end."

"Foolhardy, obstinate heretic and Lutheran!" exclaimed Veronica, angrily, "I hate you, I despise you, and rejoice to tell you that, since you will persist in defying the authority of the church, you are now to learn that she can inflict still sorer punishments than any you have yet endured. You are to spend this night alone in the chapel, kneeling before the image of the Virgin and Child in front of the altar."

She went out, shut the door, and turned the key in the lock; the sound of her footsteps, descending the narrow stairway that led to the cell, quickly died away in the distance; and again Blanche was left to solitude and silence. She lay trembling on her pallet, her heart sinking within her with terror and dismay. The thought of spending a whole night alone in a Popish chapel filled her with fear. Yet she soon began to reflect, "I shall not, after all, be more alone there than here; my precious Saviour will be with me even there, and nothing can hurt me without his will; nor will he suffer anything to befall me which shall not be for my eternal good."

These comforting thoughts brought calmness and peace to her troubled soul; and, having eaten her scanty meal, she laid herself down and slept until aroused by the unlocking of her cell-door a second time.

It was Veronica again, with a lighted taper in her hand

"Come!" she said, in a tone of authority; and Blanche silently rose and followed her down the winding stairway, until, at length, reaching the ground-floor, they paused before a narrow, pointed door, which Veronica unlocked with a key that she took from her pocket. There were bolts, too, and with some difficulty she withdrew them, and forced the door open, admitting a gust of wind and a flurry of snow that put out her taper, leaving them in darkness. She uttered an exclamation of impatience, and Blanche drew back with a shiver, and, glancing through the portal, saw that it opened upon the grounds, and that they were now white with snow.

"Is this the way to the chapel?" she asked, shivering again at the thought of facing the storm.

"It is the way you will take to get there, to-night," replied Veronica. "Go; yonder it is." And she pointed with her finger. "You will find the door unfastened, and you are to go in and spend the night, as I told you, kneeling and praying before the image of the Virgin and Child in front of the altar. You will remain there upon your knees until the clock strikes five. Then you must return to your cell. It will be useless to attempt to re-enter the house any sooner; for until that time you will find this and every other door locked and barred. Go!" And she pushed the child out into the night and the driving storm; for the bitter winter wind was blowing in wild gusts,—rattling the windows, roaring through the woods, and sending the snow flying hither and thither in every direction.

Blanche shuddered and trembled, and hurried on toward the chapel, the cold seeming to penetrate to her very vitals; for she was but thinly clad, and both

head and feet were bare. Her pretty and comfortable clothing had been taken from her at the time of her incarceration in the tower; and she now wore a dress of coarse, dark serge, and a hempen rope about her waist.

The chapel was not more than a hundred yards distant; but it must be reached by wading through snow several feet deep; and when at last the door was gained, all was darkness, silence, and bitter cold. She pushed it open and entered, finding the stone pavement scarcely warmer to her poor half-frozen feet than the snow without. The door closed behind her with a slight noise that echoed through the empty building; and she stood still, shuddering and trembling from head to foot. The echo died away, and all was silent as the grave within, while without the wind shrieked and howled, moaning through the tree-tops, sighing round the corners, and dashing the snow and sleet against the windows.

It required all the courage with which the child's firm faith in an almighty and ever-present Friend inspired her, to keep her from swooning with terror. Claspings her hands together, she silently asked him to be with and protect her; then cautiously she groped her way to the steps of the altar, where she knelt down as she had been ordered,—but not before any image or picture; and though she prayed, it was to God alone; for not even to save herself from torture and death would she have been guilty of so great a sin as that of offering worship or adoration to any other than the living God.

Cold and fear would have kept her awake through all the long hours, but a sweet sense of her Saviour's

presence, and love, and protecting care, mercifully granted to her, lulled her fears to rest; and at length, overcome by weakness and fatigue, exhausted nature gave way, and she fell into a deep sleep, her knees upon the floor of the aisle, and her head resting upon the steps of the altar.

How long she had slept, she did not know, when she was wakened by the touch of a cold hand upon her cheek, and, starting up, beheld a white-robed figure, dimly discernible in the gloom, standing by her side.

"Heretic, beware!" it said, in a sepulchral voice, extending a hand threateningly toward her as it spoke "Do you sleep, when bidden to pray? Do you refuse to kneel in adoration before the blessed Queen of heaven—the holy Mother of God? Beware! recant and abjure your vile heresies, or the devil will have you, body and soul."

Blanche swooned with terror; and, when she recovered her consciousness, a faint light, the dawn of a winter's day, was stealing in at the windows, and, knowing by that that the hour for her return to her cell had passed, she rose and feebly groped her way from the chapel out into the open air. It was piercingly cold, and by the time she reached the tower-door her numbed fingers almost refused to lift the latch.

But Veronica was there, apparently waiting for her, and, hearing her fumbling outside, opened the door and admitted her.

"Why did you not come sooner?" she asked. "It is an hour past the time."

"I fainted," said Blanche, "and did not recover from my swoon in time to hear the striking of the clock."

"What caused you to faint?" asked Veronica, looking searchingly into her face.

"Fright," replied Blanche, with simple, straightforward truthfulness.

"Fright? What frightened you?" asked her interrogator, while a gleam of malignant satisfaction flitted across her features.

"A figure robed in white and speaking in a hollow voice," said Blanche. "It was foolish in me to be alarmed, for I know that my heavenly Father is able to protect me against every foe, and I do not believe the dead walk the earth, or appear to us in visible form, or speak to us in an audible voice: so that I am convinced it was a living, human creature. But I am very weak from long fasting, and easily overcome."

"Nay," said Veronica, "it was doubtless an unearthly visitant; and you had better heed the admonition it gave you."

Blanche turned on her a look of surprise and inquiry, and a sudden gleam of intelligence lighted up her face.

"Did it not utter a warning?" asked Veronica, catching herself in some confusion. "Its very appearance was one; but were not its words also?"

"They were," replied Blanche, repeating them. "And now I think," she was about to add, "that, in spite of the unnatural tone, the voice was familiar;" but prudence bade her forbear, and she listened in silence to Veronica's repeated and lengthened exhortation to her to take heed and beware that she did not slight so strange and solemn a warning.

They had stood, while talking, at the foot of the narrow, winding stair that led to Blanche's cell; and now they slowly ascended it, and a few moments more

saw the child again locked up within the gloomy walls of her prison.

With clothing stiff and damp with the snow still clinging to it, hands and feet aching with cold, utterly exhausted with fasting, the long vigil, and the sudden fright, the poor child sank down upon her hard pallet, feeling that her soul would choose strangling and death rather than a continuation of life under such circumstances. Then came visions of the warmth, the plenty, ease, and comfort, yea, even the luxury and splendor, which might be hers if she would yield merely an outward conformity to the wishes and commands of those into whose power she had fallen, the tempter whispering that it need be only outward, while in her heart she could still worship God alone and believe nothing but his truth; and at the same time he drew a vivid picture of the sufferings yet in store for her if she continued her determined resistance to the authority of the Romish Church. The poor, lonely, suffering little one was sorely tried and tempted; and, had the priest come to her at that moment with his threatenings and promises, she might have yielded.

But the words of Jesus, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," and those other words of inspiration, "If ye suffer for righteousness's sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled," seemed softly whispered to her poor, trembling heart, and the moment of weakness was past. She wept before the Lord, pleading for pardon with penitential sorrow as deep and heartfelt as if she had indeed denied and forsaken him; and most earnestly she besought him for strength to continue steadfast unto the end.

And her petition was granted her. A sweet sense of her Saviour's forgiving love and tenderness filled her soul with joy and peace, and when, an hour later, the priest entered her cell, he found her still as firm as ever in her adherence to the faith of the Bible. In vain he coaxed and persuaded, stormed and threatened; she had but one answer for him, meekly yet firmly spoken, "I cannot deny Christ Jesus my Lord." And at length, hurling at her devoted head all the anathemas of Rome, he left her, pale, trembling, and weeping, but withal rejoicing that again strength had been given her according to her day.

Long, weary weeks of constant trial and suffering followed. Much fasting and many heavy penances was Blanche forced to endure, many a lonely midnight vigil she kept in the chapel, and so very feeble and so fearfully emaciated had she at length become, that her own mother would scarcely have recognized her. She seemed slowly sinking into the grave, dying by inches, yet as far as ever from submitting to the will of her persecutors.

She was slowly passing from the chapel to the house, one cold, dark morning, when a hideous apparition suddenly started up in her path,—a dark form, with horns and hoofs and blazing eyeballs, and arms extended as if to clasp her in its horrible embrace.

"Heretic," it hissed in her ear, "I am the foul fiend, and you are mine, body and soul. Come with me."

Already almost more dead than alive, the poor child was quite unable to endure the shock; and, with a wild shriek of inexpressible terror, she sank to the ground in a death-like swoon. There Fanchette found her, some hours later, still lying as one dead; and, raising

the slight, attenuated form in her arms, she carried it up to the room the little girl had first occupied in the house, and, laying it on the bed, proceeded to apply restoratives; weeping bitterly the while over the sad change the cruelty of her persecutors had wrought in the poor child whom she had scarcely seen since her incarceration in the tower.

A brain-fever followed, and for many days Blanche's life trembled in the balance.

CHAPTER XXI.

"All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand banners rise into the air,
With orient colors waving. With them rose
A forest huge of spears, and thronging helms
Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable."

MILTON: *Paradise Lost*.

WE left Madalena mourning in bitterness of soul over the loss of her beloved children, yet submitting to the terrible trial without a murmur, because it was her heavenly Father's will to permit it to come upon her

"My children! my children! I am bereaved of my children!" was the constant cry of her torn and bleeding heart. yet ever accompanied by the language of entire submission, "'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.'"

She had ever been a very tender, loving mother, and taking her children from her was like tearing her heart

strings asunder ; and yet her distress and anguish were far more for them than for herself ; for she knew not what sufferings of mind or body might be inflicted upon them by the cruel foes who had so ruthlessly torn them from her sheltering arms. But, when tortured with these anxious thoughts and fears, it was an unspeakable comfort to be able to commit them to the ever-watchful care and keeping of her heavenly Father, hers and theirs ; and hourly her prayers ascended to his throne on their behalf.

A dark shadow seemed to have fallen upon the cottage, and all faces grew sad, all eyes filled with tears, at sight of the empty cradle and Blanche's vacant chair, or the casual mention of the names of the loved and lost ; and, dearly as Madalena prized her husband's rare visits to his home, she now dreaded, almost as much as she longed for, his coming ; for when he asked for his sweet Blanche and his darling baby boy, what could she say ? or how could she bear the sight of his anguish when he should learn the fearful truth ?

She was not looking for an early visit from him ; but, contrary to her expectations, he came one night, scarcely a week after the abduction of his children. His anguish on first learning his loss was fearful to behold.

"Alas, my children, what a terrible fate is yours !" he groaned. "Had you but fallen into the hand of God, I could have borne it ; but, alas ! alas ! you have fallen into the power of the litter foes of your faith and people ; and the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel !"

"Yet are they not in the hands of God, my son ?" said Barbara. "What says the Psalmist ? 'If I take

the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' And Jesus says of his sheep, 'They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.' We have reason—blessed be his holy name!—to believe that our little Blanehe is his indeed ; and Hugo also is a child of the covenant ; and the promise is, 'I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.'"

"Yes," he said, "thanks be to him for that precious promise ; and I will try to trust my babes to his keeping without a doubt, a murmur, or a fear."

Hubert remained with his family but a few hours, then hastened to rejoin his brother warriors ; for, as Barbara had foreseen, the late cruel edict had had no effect whatever, and the Waldenses still kept the field, and still defeated the ducal troops wherever they presented themselves. Next peace was offered the persecuted folk on condition that they would lay down their arms, would not raise the question of religion, and that each commune which had any representation to make should make it separately ; in other words, that they should place themselves in the power of the duke, give up the very question at issue, and dissolve the union which constituted their strength. Of course these terms were at once rejected. At length, upon the mediation of Holland, Germany, and the Protestant Swiss Cantons, the duke consented to a conference. Ambassadors from the mediating powers reached Turin in November, 1663. Soon afterward eight deputies from the valleys joined them, and the conference began.

There being now a suspension of hostilities—the natural state of things during a negotiation—Hubert

ventured to pay another and longer visit than usual to his family, but remained carefully within-doors during the hours of daylight, lest some watchful enemy should see him and betray him into the hands of his foes.

Madalena had, one afternoon, been on an errand to one of the villages in the plain below, and was returning to the heights, when, on reaching the foot of that on which her cottage stood, her steps were arrested by the sound of a deep groan, as of some one suffering intense pain, and, looking in the direction whence it seemed to come, she presently perceived something fluttering in the breeze, in the midst of a clump of bushes about half-way up the ascent. It was evidently a woman's dress; and on a closer scrutiny she was satisfied that it was one she had often seen worn by Ursula di Agnolo.

The weather was intensely cold, the ground thickly covered with snow and ice, and the hill very steep and slippery, and Ursula, while toiling up the ascent some hours before, laden with a bundle of fagots and provisions, had missed the path on account of the snow, slipped, and fallen down into the ravine. Fortunately, her clothes had caught in that clump of bushes, thus staying her progress, or she would inevitably have been dashed in pieces at the foot of the precipice. As it was, she was much injured by the fall, and in great danger of freezing to death, when her groans attracted Madalena's attention.

Seeing what had befallen her enemy, and that she could not reach her without assistance, Madalena called to the sufferer in a kindly tone, telling her not to despair, for she would bring her help as speedily as possible. Then, hastening up the hill to her cottage, she

told her husband of the poor woman's situation; and he, though well knowing the danger he incurred by thus exposing himself to view, went immediately to the spot, and, with the assistance of a neighbor, soon succeeded in rescuing her from her perilous position; and, carrying her up the hill, they deposited her upon a bed in her own cottage.

Madalena and Barbara then dressed her wounds, and did all in their power to soothe and comfort her. She seemed so ill that Barbara spent the night at her bedside; for she had no friends, no one to care for her, that they knew of, except her children, who were too young and ignorant to render much assistance at such a time.

Hubert and Madalena did not retire to rest, either, but sat by the fire in their own home, in earnest conversation, until after midnight; then Hubert, feeling that he would now be running too great a risk in remaining longer with his family, set out on his return to the Waldensian camp, which he reached in safety before day.

Ursula was suffering from fever brought on by her injuries and exposure, and for more than a week was quite delirious; and during all that time she and her children were tenderly cared for by those whom they had ever treated with such bitter scorn and contempt, heaping upon them every form of abuse and doing them every injury in their power, and that, too, without having ever received the smallest provocation from them.

At length her reason returned, and, though still far too weak and ill to rise from her bed, she could no longer remain unconscious of the great favors she was receiving at the hands of those from whom she de-

served so little. She first recognized their attendance upon her with a flush of surprise and displeasure, then lay for a long time in sullen silence, receiving their kindnesses as that which necessity alone compelled her to accept. They, however, took no notice of her ungracious manner, but continued to wait upon her, and to do all that their slender means allowed for her and her family; and at length, completely overcome by this unmerited kindness, Ursula one day gave way to a burst of tears, asking Madalena—who happened to be alone with her at the moment—how they could find it in their hearts to be so kind to one who had always shown herself their bitter enemy and had done them so much injury.

“Our religion teaches us to act thus,” replied Madalena. “Our Saviour commands, ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.’ And he himself set us the example, by praying for his murderers, ‘Father, forgive them.’”

“Perhaps you don’t know all the harm I’ve done you? You’d hardly be here, doing me kindness, if you did,” said Ursula, fixing her great black eyes upon Madalena’s face with a searching gaze. “Do you know where your lost little ones are, and who carried them away?”

Madalena’s face flushed, then grew deadly pale, and she leaned against the wall for support, for her heart beat so fast and loud she could scarcely breathe.

“Oh, where are they?” she gasped, clasping her hands together, while hot tears streamed down her cheeks. “My darling babe! my sweet *Blanche*!—shall I ever see them again?”

"I'm afraid not," replied Ursula, turning her head away with a groan. "It's my work, but I can't undo it, though sorry enough I am for it now. They're in the house of Madame Borelli, off yonder among the hills toward Pignerol. She's rich and childless, and wanted one or two pretty children to take and bring up as her own. I heard that, and I went to her and told her of yours—the two that are gone—how beautiful they were, and reminded her that it would be a good work to take them and bring them up in the true faith. I told her, too, where they were often to be found at play, down on the bank of the torrent, and how easy it would be to have two or three men in hiding behind the rocks, while a carriage could wait in the little glen on the other side of the bridge, and thus, the moment a favorable opportunity offered, they could be carried off and safely lodged in her house before they were even missed at home. And that is the way it was done. Now curse me, Madalena Romano, and then go away and leave me to die alone; for I deserve it, and I've none to care whether I live or die—but these helpless children," she added, in a bitter, despairing tone, burying her face in the bedclothes.

Madalena did not reply for some moments, but, sinking down upon the floor, covered her face with her hands, while convulsive sobs—sobs that told of an almost breaking heart—shook her whole frame.

But at length she spoke, her sweet, gentle tones touching Ursula to the quick with remorse for the evil she had wrought one so kind and forgiving. "Nay, Ursula, I will not forsake you in your trouble," she said. "You have done a deep, a terrible wrong to me and mine; but I forgive you as I hope to be forgiven

by Him against whom I have sinned times and ways without number. You could not have known the half of the anguish you were bringing upon us, or you would never have done it."

"Yes, I would," replied Ursula; "I would have done it all the same; for I hated you with a bitter, relentless hate."

"Why?" asked Madalena, sadly. "I never did you a wrong."

"No; but you were a heretic; and you are one still; but I will pray to the Blessed Virgin to show you what a false faith yours is; and, if you will but renounce your errors, it may be that your children will be restored to you."

"I cannot," said Madalena; "I cannot renounce my faith; I cannot deny my Lord even to recover my children, who are dearer to me than life."

"Then you will burn in hell forever," said Ursula; "for there is no salvation out of the true church."

Madalena made no reply, but busied herself in efforts to make her patient more comfortable.

Ursula tossed about, moaning and groaning as if in great distress of mind or body. Suddenly, seizing Madalena's hand, "Tell me, is death near?" she asked, with a wild look. "Oh, I can't die yet! I've nothing laid by for masses for my poor soul, and no friend that will pay for them, either; and I'll have to burn for ages in the fires of purgatory." And, with a shudder and a deep groan, she fell back upon her pillow again.

"'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,'" whispered Madalena, bending over her. "Jesus himself said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;’ ‘Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’”

“Ah, they are blessed words indeed, were they but true,” exclaimed Ursula, eagerly; “but where did you find them?”

“They are his own words,” replied Madalena, “and they are indeed blessed words to lost and helpless sinners.”

“Sinners!” repeated Ursula, shuddering: “oh, yes, it is my sins that are sinking me down to purgatory, and will keep me there for hundreds of years, unless I can live longer and do some good works to atone for them.”

“Ursula,” said Madalena, “do not your priests tell you that it is from the Bible your church derives her authority for what she teaches?”

Ursula assented.

“Then listen to me,” continued Madalena, speaking with great earnestness. “I have read the Bible through many, many times; and from beginning to end it has not in it one word about such a place as purgatory.”

Ursula looked her astonishment; then, shaking her head, “Ah, but you’re a heretic,” she said, “and I must not listen to you: and, besides, there’s hell.” And she covered her face, and groaned aloud.

“Yes,” said Madalena, “the Bible speaks of hell as a place of torment for the finally impenitent; but it also tells us that ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Nothing that we can do will atone for the least of our sins: ‘all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;’ but

'there is a fountain opened for sin and for all uncleanness.' 'The blood of Jesus Christ,' God's Son, 'cleanses us from all sin.' "

"Oh, they are blessed words, if I only might listen to them!" again exclaimed Ursula. "But no; I must not; you are a heretic, and would make me lose my soul." And she turned her face to the wall with another deep groan.

"Oh, my sins! my sins!" she cried out again, the next moment; "they will sink me to hell! Where is Andrea?" she asked, starting up in the bed; "he must bring a priest, that I may confess and get my sins forgiven."

"Your children are not here; they have all gone out, I know not whither," said Madalena. "But why send for a priest, when the Lord Jesus is here close at hand, and ready to hear and pardon and cleanse you, if you will but come renouncing every other hope and pleading only his atoning blood?"

"No, no," replied Ursula, shaking her head; "the church says expressly no penitent person can have remission of sins but by supplication to the priest."

Madalena sighed deeply. "Ah," she said, "it were terrible, indeed, were that the truth; for then how often must the soul go long burdened with a sense of guilt, and often it must pass unforgiven into eternity, because a priest was not at hand! and if in confessing to him any sin were forgotten, would it be forgiven? and yet who can confess them all? for 'who can understand his errors?' But our God knows them all, and with him we can plead for the pardon of forgotten and unconscious sins: and he is ever near, and in his great love and condescension is ever ready to hear, and

answer, and forgive. Ah, Ursula, your priests have deceived you; for the Bible tells us that ‘to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses.’”

“Mother,” said Paul’s voice at the door of the cottage; and, rising, she went to him.

The boy looked pale and excited. “Mother,” he said, “Philip and I have been out on the crags, and there are many horsemen down yonder in the plain. What does it mean? I thought there was an armistice until affairs should be arranged at Turin.”

“This is treachery,” she said, with a slight tremor in her voice; “a new attack is doubtless to be made upon our valleys, and they expect to find us unprepared. Hark! yes, there is the sound of musketry,—coming, I think, from the direction of Santa Margarita.”

“It is,” said Barbara, advancing toward them from their own cottage. “Madalena, I will stay with Ursula, while you go with the children out upon the crags. You may be able to see something of the battle; and let us all engage, the while, in earnest prayer to God for our fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers, that he will cover their heads in the day of battle, and grant them victory over their foes.”

Madalena went, taking Philip and Paul with her, and leaving the little ones at play together by the kitchen fire, charging them to stay there until her return.

On reaching the crags and looking down into the plain of San Giovanni, she perceived it occupied by a hundred horsemen under the command of Captain Cagnolo. The discharge of musketry in the direction of Santa Margarita still continued, and they stood anxiously listening to it, though as yet unable to see any-

thing of the combatants. The sound seemed gradually to recede farther into the mountains.

"Mother," said Paul, "I fear they are driving the Vaudois before them; for the sound seems to retrograde toward Tagliarette."

"Yes," she answered, sadly, while tears trembled in her eyes; "I fear it is so. Come, my sons, let us kneel down here upon the snow, and cry earnestly to our God to sustain and help our brethren."

They knelt, and from full hearts poured out their petitions,—continuing to do so for some time, remembering the promise, "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee,"—many of their neighbors, who had come out upon the same errand, joining with them. And, even as they prayed, there was a change; the sounds no longer grew more distant, but seemed for a time to be stationary, as though those who had been driven before their foes were now making a stand.

Philip rose to his feet, and the next moment exclaimed, "They are about to be reinforced! I see a troop of Vaudois marching up from Angrogna."

"God be thanked!" exclaimed Madalena. "He is indeed the hearer and answerer of prayer." And she and Paul remained upon their knees, still pleading the cause of their oppressed country, while Philip eagerly watched and listened.

It soon became apparent that, as on several former occasions, the Papists had planned a number of attacks to be made simultaneously upon the different valleys, and that the conflict was now raging, not merely in the vicinity of La Tour, but, at the same time, in the valley of Angrogna also, and in that of the Clusone; and from the latter columns of ascending smoke, tell-

ing of burning buildings, conveyed the sad tidings that there the treacherous foe had been victorious. Philip noted this with deep sorrow, but almost immediately uttered a shout of mingled joy and triumph, as he saw those who had attacked Santa Margarita driven down into the plain of La Tour by the victorious Waldenses.

Most devoutly Madalena returned thanks to the God of battles; and then she and the boys, finding themselves much chilled, for the weather was very cold, went home, there anxiously to wait for news from the valleys.

It was brought the next day by Jean Monnen, who came direct from Angrogna, having participated in the fight at that place. All the women and children of the hamlet crowded about him; and, in answer to their eager questions, he told them that four attacks had been made the previous day upon the valleys,—the Count San Damiano having marched upon Prarustin, by San Segonzo, at the head of sixteen hundred and fifty-five foot and fifty horse, the Marquis de Parelli toward Angrogna by La Garsinera, with fifteen hundred and seventy-six foot and fifty horse, and the Count Genegli toward the same point, but by Le Porte and San Germano, with a battalion of seven hundred and eighty-six men, while Count di Bagnolo, at the head of eleven hundred and eighteen men, moved against the Waldenses by Le Copiere and Santa Margarita.

“It was an act of the grossest treachery!” exclaimed the lad, indignantly; “for pending a negotiation it is always understood that there will be a cessation of hostilities on both sides.”

"True, indeed; but tell us what success they had," said his eager listeners.

"At Angrogna," replied the boy, proudly, "the Marquis de Parelli had no success at all. Captain Priornello was in command, and we defeated the Papists. At Santa Margarita and Le Copiere the Vaudois were at first driven back; but at Tagliarette they made a stand, and, seeing a troop of our brethren marching to their aid from Angrogna, they took courage and became assailants in their turn, making a vigorous assault upon Di Bagnolo's troops in front at the same moment that the Angrognese attacked them in the rear; and they, seized with sudden terror, remembering what tales their priests have told them of the Vaudois being in league with the devil, and therefore invulnerable, turned and fled, pursued by our troops, down into the plain of La Tour."

"To God be all the glory!" said several voices. "But we saw smoke rising from San Germano, and we fear that there they met with greater success."

"Yes," replied Jean, sorrowfully; "there the Vaudois were completely defeated, their fields and vineyards devastated, and their houses burned; and some of the poor people, both there and at Roccapiatte, were shockingly handled. Yet even there we made the victory very bitter to them: more than a hundred of their soldiers were slain, and, besides, there fell the Count de la Trinité, the young Count de Saint-Frons, Captain Biala, and M. de Grande-Maison."

CHAPTER XXII.

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them."—ISAIAH, lxiii. 9.

WHILE Madalena watched by Ursula's sick-bed, her own sweet Blanche lay on a far more sumptuous couch indeed, but tended by stranger-hands, and for days hovering between life and death. Madame Borelli, who did not yet despair of making her what she wished, was very anxious for her recovery, and therefore provided her with the best medical advice, while Fanchette nursed her with the tenderest care, which was at length rewarded by seeing the child slowly but surely gaining strength.

Blanche herself seemed to be the only one in the house who did not rejoice in her returning health; she had a struggle to be resigned to life, seeing she could look forward to nothing on earth but continued suffering. Her baby brother was the one bright spot in this sad existence of hers; but, while she was yet scarcely able to sit up all day, he was taken suddenly and violently ill, and, after a few hours of intense suffering, breathed his last in her arms.

He had seemed much better a few moments before, and Fanchette had left the room on some errand, so that for a time Blanche was quite alone with her dead. For many minutes she held the beloved and beautiful clay close to her heart, dropping scalding tears on the still, unconscious face, pressing passion-

ate kisses on the fair, open brow and the soft cheek, which in this short illness had lost nothing of its roundness; then, laying him gently on the bed and straightening the little limbs and softly closing the eyes, as she had seen older persons do—for, suffering as the Vaudois were from every kind of privation and hardship, death had often been busy among them—she knelt down by his side, with one little cold hand fast clasped in hers, and poured out her soul in prayer to God. The loss—the parting forever in this world with the last of her loved ones—was a terrible one to her; yet with the heart-breaking sorrow was mingled great joy for him, so early gathered safely into the Saviour's bosom, and thus rescued from a fate she had so dreaded for him, and the dread of which she knew was the bitterest drop in the cup of her parents' sorrow at his loss; and she longed—oh, how intensely!—to let them know that their darling babe was safe, and that she herself had been enabled thus far to hold fast her profession, in nothing terrified by her adversaries.

And thus Fanchette, on her return to the room, found her—on her knees by the side of the little corpse, her lips moving as if in prayer, while tears of mingled joy and sorrow streamed fast down her thin, pale cheeks.

But one half-hour ago Fanchette had been full of joy at seeing the dear babe so much better that the danger seemed to her well-nigh past; and now one glance told her that the spirit had fled, and she burst into a loud wail of sorrow.

“Oh,” she cried, “I thought he was getting well! The loveliest, sweetest babe I ever saw! Ah, what will madame say?”

Then, seeing that Blanche was half fainting with

grief and exhaustion, she lifted her in her arms and laid her on the bed.

"Don't weep so," she said, kindly, wiping away her own tears as she spoke; "he had never sinned, and Father Ignatius baptized him and made him a member of the true church; and, being so young and innocent, I'm sure he wouldn't have to go to purgatory at all, but is now safe in heaven."

"I am not grieving for him, Fanchette," replied Blanche, as soon as her sobs would permit her to speak, "for I doubt not he is safe in the bosom of my God; not because he had no sin, for he was born with a corrupt nature, but because Jesus has died for him, and has washed him from all guilt and pollution in his own precious blood. Oh, no! it is not for him—dear, blessed, baby boy!—that I grieve, but for myself. Ah, had it but pleased the Lord to take me also! But I must wait his time. Lord, help me to wait patiently, believing that thy time is best, and that thou art infinitely wise and good and kind. 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!'" she cried, clasping her hands, and raising her streaming eyes to heaven.

At that instant the door opened, and Madame Borelli entered, accompanied by the attending physician. Both seemed shocked and surprised to find the little patient gone. Madame Borelli wept very much, bending over the little corpse and kissing it several times; for she had grown very fond of the sweet babe. She then spoke kindly to Blanche, gave some directions to Fanchette, and left the room.

It was painful to Blanche to see her little brother laid out in Popish style, with burning candles and crucifix; yet she knew that these things could not affect

the happiness of the redeemed spirit, and she was very thankful that she was allowed to remain constantly by the side of the body until it was carried away for burial. Very dear he was to her even in death, and bitter was the parting with the precious clay. Yet the thought of his eternal safety and happiness secured, and the hope, inspired by the consciousness of physical weakness, that, though he could never return to her, she might soon go to him, helped her to bear it. And still more consoling was the sense of the presence and love of that dear unseen Friend who had promised never to leave nor forsake her, and in the light of whose countenance she was still enabled to rejoice even in the midst of this sore bereavement.

Hugo was laid in his little grave, and, alas, how silent and gloomy the house seemed to both Blanche and Fanchette without him! The latter never failed to mention him in her prayers, asking that, were he not already in heaven, he might have a speedy entrance there; but Blanche offered no more petitions for him; she knew that he needed them not; and, if she breathed his dear name at all, it was only to give thanks for the hope that he had been redeemed by the blood of Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and was now lying in Jesus' bosom, safe from all sin and sorrow and pain.

Several weeks passed slowly by, and Blanche found herself steadily gaining strength. She was not glad to feel that it was so, for she had fondly hoped soon to follow her little brother; but she strove to be resigned, and to submit her will entirely and uncomplainingly to that of her heavenly Father. She knew that she could not expect to remain long in her present comfortable quarters, and by the sad look with which Fanchette

now and then regarded her, and the hints of coming evil she occasionally let fall, she was convinced that another trial of her faith was near at hand; and earnestly she asked for strength to meet it.

It came at length. She was summoned to another interview with Madame Borelli in her dressing-room, and there plied with all the old arguments, persuasions, entreaties, bribes, and threats: but all in vain; her feet were firmly planted upon the Rock of Ages, and she was not to be moved.

"Obstinate little heretic, you will compel us to use great severity with you," said madame, angrily. "I have pitied your sufferings, and wished to save you from a repetition of them; but it is all in vain. You must return to the chamber of penitence to-night unless you consent to abjure your vile heresies; for such is the order of Father Ignatius. Go back to your room, and there consider the alternative set before you,—a life of ease, comfort, and luxury as my daughter, or one of suffering and death as an obstinate heretic. The choice is still open to you until Veronica shall come to lead you to your cell. Go!"

Blanche obeyed, shuddering, trembling, weeping; for, oh, the horrors of that prison to which she was about again to be consigned, and the yet more terrible night-vigils in the lonely chapel! "Could she, oh, could she endure it?" she asked herself, again and again. Ah, she felt that in her own strength it would be impossible; but sweetly came to her the promise, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

She had still some hours of respite ere Madame Borelli's threat would be carried out, and they were

spent in gathering up her strength for the trial, pouring out her soul in prayer to God, and calling to mind and meditating upon such passages of Holy Writ, suitable to her need, as she could call to remembrance; and, when Veronica came and asked if she were ready now to abjure, she returned the same reply as so often before, "I cannot deny my Lord," and, bidding the weeping Fanchette a calm good-by, rose and followed her conductress without a murmur or a tear, though her face was very pale, and the expression of her countenance exceeding sorrowful.

It was already dark, and a wintry storm raged without, the wind blowing in fitful gusts, or sighing drearily about the house, as Veronica, lamp in hand, moved silently on through the long halls and wide ante-rooms that led to the tower, then up the narrow winding stairs to the chamber of penitence, Blanche following as silent as herself. The key grated in the lock, and, throwing open the door, Veronica signed to the child to enter.

Blanche obeyed with an irrepressible shudder. The door closed upon her, the stairs echoed for a moment to Veronica's descending footsteps, and all was darkness and silence.

A feeling of unutterable horror, dread, and despair came over the child; she felt as if buried alive, never more to look upon the beauties of nature or breathe the pure air of heaven; and, falling on her knees, she wept in bitter agony of soul, praying wildly that death might come to end her misery. But at length she grew calm again; the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, brought many sweet and precious promises to her remembrance, and she was lifted from the depths of

despair, and once more made to rejoice in that love from which neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor anything else could ever separate her. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," was the Saviour's parting legacy to his sorrowing disciples; and to little Blanche, amid the darkness and silence and loneliness of her dreary prison-cell, this precious promise was fulfilled, and, stretching herself upon her pallet, she presently fell into a slumber as sweet and profound as that of a babe upon its mother's breast.

Days passed by in the old dull, monotonous way, and the child drooped and grew paler and weaker in the close, pent-up atmosphere of the cell; her appetite forsook her, and she turned with loathing from the miserable food provided for her. Veronica was, as before, her only attendant; and silently she had come and gone for more than a week, when one day, to Blanche's extreme surprise, she walked into the cell, and, sitting down beside her, asked, in a kindly tone, how she felt, and why she had not eaten the bread she had brought her the night before.

"I cannot; I am not hungry, and it is quite impossible for me to swallow it," said the child, in a patient, uncomplaining tone.

"Do you find this a pleasant abode?" asked Veronica, looking searchingly into her face.

"Far from it," replied Blanche. "I can bear it very well at night, when darkness hides these horrible walls that dazzle my poor eyes and make my head swim till I think the room is turning round and round, and sometimes that the floor is sinking beneath me, or the ceiling coming down to crush me: then I can do nothing but

shut my eyes, and pray to God to keep me from losing my reason."

"It is a horrible place," said Veronica, with a shudder, "and it is killing you. How can you endure it thus day after day and week after week?"

"I could not, if it were not for the presence of my Saviour with me here, and his promise never to leave nor forsake me," replied Blanche, glad tears shining in her eyes.

"Strange!" muttered Veronica, turning away her face; and she sat for some moments in thoughtful silence, with her head resting upon her hand, and her elbow on her knee. Then, turning suddenly to Blanche, "I have watched you carefully all these months," she said, "and I have been amazed and confounded at your steadfastness under all the terrible trials you have had to undergo, and at the look of heavenly peace and joy I have often seen in your face. It has led me to doubt whether yours be not, after all, the true faith; and I want you now to tell me what it is, and whence come the joy and peace that can make even a place like this endurable?"

"From believing in Jesus, and loving him," replied Blanche, simply. "Nothing else, I am sure, could give me one joyful feeling while shut up here."

"I have thought *I* believed in him," said Veronica; "I believe that he suffered, died, and rose again for man's salvation; but my faith does not bring joy or peace to my soul; I find my sins a terrible burden still, and I cannot get rid of them. I have fasted and prayed for many days and nights; I have worn sackcloth, and lain in ashes; I have scourged myself, and used every means to mortify the flesh; but all in vain: the burden

still remains. I have been often to confession, but the priest's absolution gives me very little relief; I cannot feel that my sins are forgiven. And yet I have done a great deal to earn forgiveness. I have worn pebbles in my shoes till my feet were so sore that I was ready to shriek with pain at every step I took. I have worn small cords, tied so tightly round different parts of my body, that they cut through the flesh to the bone; and I have done very many good works among the poor and sick; and, alas! what more can I do?"

"Nothing," answered the low, sweet voice of Blanche. "Cast away all your own works, and come to Jesus. He says, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' 'I will *give*,'—it is all a *free gift*; it cannot be bought, either with money or by our works; we must take it as a gift, or we cannot have it at all. 'By *grace* ye are saved.' 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Veronica listened with deep attention. "But my sins," she said, as Blanche paused; "how shall I get rid of them?"

"'Thou shalt call his name *Jesus*; for he shall save his people from their sins,'" repeated Blanche, earnestly. "'He has borne the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;' and his blood cleanses from all sin."

"But must we not do penance for our sins, and good works to merit salvation?" asked Veronica.

"'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,' the Bible says; all our best services are defiled by sin, and have need to be forgiven," replied Blanche. "How, then, can we do anything to merit salvation? None of our works can be good in the sight of God, and salvation is his *free gift*, purchased for his people by the

righteousness, the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"But surely such mortifications of the flesh as I have practiced are necessary—are required; for are we not commanded to take up our cross daily?" asked Veronica.

"We are, indeed," said Blanche; "but it is the cross he lays upon us, not one of our own invention. The trials God sends will do us good; those we make for ourselves will be of no benefit: and Jesus has borne the whole penalty of God's broken law,—has made a full atonement for our sins; and God is very good and kind, and full of love to us, Veronica, and does not take pleasure in seeing us torment ourselves. And what is it that would lead us to that, but the proud hope of thus atoning for our sins, and *earning* our salvation for ourselves, instead of humbly taking it as an undeserved gift?"

A sudden light shone in Veronica's eyes. "Ah, I see it now," she said; "it is too humbling to the pride of our nature to have salvation bestowed upon us as alms are given to a beggar who has no claim upon the giver, and so we would fain purchase it with our works. But, oh, are you *sure* that it is offered as a mere gratuity? It would be a benefaction so wonderful! so amazing!"

"'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!'" exclaimed Blanche, clasping her hands together, while tears of joy and gratitude streamed from her uplifted eyes. "The Bible tells us, Veronica, that the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"And must we not do good works?"

"Yes; but not in hope of reward,—as though our

works could deserve a recompense, or from fear of punishment; but from love; not that we *may be* saved, but because we *are* saved. Jesus said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.' But we are told, in another place, 'Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. . . . Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.' "

"Are those words from the Bible?" asked Veronica.

"Yes," replied Blanche; "those words of Jesus are from St. John's Gospel, the others from the Epistle of St. James."

"You must have read the Bible a great deal?" remarked Veronica, inquiringly.

"Yes," said Blanche; "the Bible is everything to the Vaudois; it is almost the only book in my father's cottage, and many chapters of it are read by us every day."

"But our priests tell us it is a bad and dangerous book in the hands of the unlearned," said Veronica.

"Ah," replied Blanche, "but our Lord's command is, 'Search the Scriptures;' and in the Acts of the Apostles it is said of the Bereans, 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so;' and it is added, 'Therefore many of them believed.' "

Veronica was silent for a moment, appearing lost in thought. Then, turning to Blanche again, she asked, "Have you read the Bible all through?—every word of it?"

"Every word," said Blanche; "and not only once, but many times."

"Then tell me what it says of purgatory," she asked, eagerly.

"Not one word, from beginning to end," replied Blanche. "It speaks of but two places where the spirits of the departed go,—the one for the saved, the other for the damned; the which two places we call paradise and hell."

Again Veronica looked thoughtful. "What does it say about confession and priestly absolution?" she asked.

"Nothing," replied Blanche; "but it says, 'Who can forgive sins but God only?' and of confession to him, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'"

"And what of the Virgin and the saints?" was the next inquiry.

"The Virgin Mary," replied Blanche, "is spoken of as blessed among women, and as the mother of Jesus; but it was of his human nature only; and nowhere in the Bible is she called the mother of God, or queen of heaven, or spoken of as holy, or as an intercessor with God; but we are expressly told, 'There is *one* mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' We believe concerning the Virgin that she was and is full of grace, as much as is necessary for her own salvation, but not to communicate to others; and in like manner do we believe concerning all the other saints; for that is what the Bible teaches."

"Then you do not address your prayers to any of them?"

“No; for it is expressly commanded, ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.’”

“But God is so great, and high, and holy, and we so sinful and of so little worth,—may we dare to come directly to him?”

“Not in our own name,” said Blanche, “but in the name of Jesus, pleading his merits and asking his intercession.”*

Again Veronica sat as if lost in thought; then, starting up hastily, she quitted the cell, leaving Blanche filled with wonder and astonishment at the strangeness of this interview. Only a few moments had passed, however, ere she returned, bringing with her a plate filled with delicate and nourishing food, which she set down before the child, saying, “Madame has sent you this; for I told her you were ill, and could not eat the coarse food provided for you by the orders of Father Ignatius. You need not fear a visit from him, for he has been summoned to Rome, and left early this morning, probably to be absent for weeks, or, it may be, for months. But eat, child; don’t spare the food; there will be plenty more, quite as good, when that is gone.”

He in whose “hand the king’s heart is as the rivers of water, so that he turneth it whithersoever he will,” had inclined that of Veronica to pity and relieve the sufferings of his little prisoner in the tower, and, while sitting with Madame Borelli that day, she frequently mentioned Blanche, and dwelt at length upon the sad change in her appearance and health, wrought by the foul air of her cell and the bad food provided for her.

* See Appendix, Note E.

Madame Borelli listened, and then seemed deep in thought; and, when Veronica came to attend her in her dressing-room, as usual, the next morning, she said, "I slept badly last night, Veronica, and, as I lay awake, I could not keep my thoughts from dwelling upon that child and what you had been saying about her; and I was trying to contrive some new plan for bringing her to a sense of her errors, and it occurred to me that, as we have now tried severity for a long time without any good effect—I think you reported her as quite as obstinate as ever in her refusal to abjure, did you not?"

"Yes, madame, quite," replied Veronica.

"Well, then," continued the lady, "it occurred to me that it might be well to try a new plan: to bring her down among us, to dress her handsomely, and give her every indulgence, hoping that at length she may become so accustomed to a life of ease, luxury, and splendor that she will not find it easy to resign it, but will abjure rather than leave it again for the chamber of penitence. What say you to my plan, Veronica?"

"That it is most excellent, my lady, quite worthy of your good sense and discernment, and that, if I may presume so far, I would strongly advise its being immediately carried out, lest the child become injured past recovery by the confinement she is now enduring."

"Then, Veronica, as soon as you have finished waiting upon me, you will bring her down at once," said madame, looking much pleased.

The sun was shining brightly, and Blanche lay on her miserable pallet, with eyes closed and hand held over them, in the vain effort to shut out the glare of

light, which had never seemed more intolerable. She was very faint and weak, and was longing inexpressibly for a breath of fresh air and a change of scene; she felt, too, the need of food, and thought Veronica was later than usual in coming with her breakfast. Then she thought of their strange interview the previous day, and sent up a fervent prayer that the poor girl might soon learn the sweetness of a Saviour's love, and that, should she stop again to question her of those things, she might be directed how to answer. At that moment a step was heard approaching, the cell-door opened, and Veronica stood before her with a bright, smiling face.

"Come, little one," she said, taking Blanche by the hand and lifting her up, "it is my pleasant mission to-day to open your prison-doors, conduct you to Fanchette, and bid her arrange your toilet; for it is madame's pleasure that you now be restored to the bosom of her family, and treated much as if you were her daughter."

"But does madame think I have abjured, or that I have any such intention?" asked Blanche, looking much perplexed and disturbed.

"No," replied Veronica, leading her out, and locking the door behind them; "she only hopes by this new mode of treatment to succeed in leading you to do so at some future time."

"My God, I thank thee for this great mercy and deliverance!" cried Blanche, clasping her hands together, and raising her eyes to heaven, while glad, grateful tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Come; we must hasten," said Veronica, seizing her hand, and hurrying her down the stairs "You

are to breakfast with madame in her dressing-room, and your toilet must first be attended to."

Fanchette was overjoyed at having her charge restored to her; and Madame Borelli, too, received the little girl very kindly; but, with the exception of Veronica, all the other members of the family shrank from and shunned her, as if she had had the plague; for not even the favor shown her by their mistress could make them forget that she was a "heretic" and still under the displeasure of the priest.

But this did not greatly disturb Blanche, as she well understood the cause, and, besides, had but little to do with them, her time being passed either in sitting with madame and Veronica, or in driving or walking out with them, except when in her own room with no companion but Fanchette. She was now very comfortable, and would have been quite happy, but for the longing for home and kindred and the constant dread of the priest's return.

His coming was, however, delayed from time to time, till months had glided by, and spring returned to gladden the earth with her fresh verdure, her sweet-scented flowers, and her singing birds.

In vain Blanche had asked for news of her family and people; no one would give it; and she was very anxious, for she knew not what their present condition and prospects might be. One morning she was alone in her own room, when Veronica came to her. Blanche had prayed much for this young girl ever since their strange conversation in the chamber of penitence, and had also watched her narrowly, noticing with joy and thankfulness that she now no longer bowed to the images or pictures, or dipped her fingers in the "holy

water," or ever spoke in favor of addressing prayers to the Virgin or saints, or confessing to the priest. But they were seldom alone together, and had never conversed on the subject since; only, when they were walking in the grounds, Veronica had sometimes begged Blanche to repeat again those passages of Scripture that spoke of the love of God to sinners, and of a free salvation purchased by the blood of Christ, and had often seemed much moved while listening to them. But now, with a face all bathed in tears, and eyes shining with joy and love, she threw her arms around the little girl, and, pressing her to her bosom, whispered, "Oh, Blanche, I have found my Saviour! I have given myself wholly to him, and my soul is filled with joy and peace in believing; and with you I am now ready, if necessary, to suffer martyrdom for his dear sake."

Blanche, too, wept for joy. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "was it for this I was taken from my home and all I loved on earth? How wonderful are the ways of God!"

"Yes," said Veronica. "I too, Blanche, am a Vaudois, stolen from my parents while yet a mere infant, and brought up a Romanist; and God sent you here to bring me back to the faith of my fathers,—the true, pure faith of the Bible."

"Then I have not suffered in vain, and God has been very gracious to us both," said Blanche. "But oh, Veronica, shall I never again see my beloved ones,—never even hear from my home or people?"

"I can tell you something of our people," said Veronica. "There has been a good deal of fighting since you were brought away—success generally on the side of the Vaudois. In November and December, nego-

tiations were carried on at Turin,—Holland, Germany, and the Protestant Swiss Cantons mediating for the persecuted folk; and while this was pending, and the poor mountaineers were faithfully observing the truce, they were treacherously attacked by the Popish troops in four divisions. San Germano was burned; some few poor creatures who fell into the hands of the soldiers were very cruelly treated,—one poor old woman being burnt alive in her bed, and others killed in quite as horrible a manner; but in the other places the Papists, though in one or two instances meeting with some success at first, were, in the end, badly defeated. Since then, a general amnesty has been granted, excepting only those who were condemned by the edict of the 25th of June.”

Blanche listened eagerly. “Ah, then,” she exclaimed, with joy, as Veronica concluded, “my father may return home! doubtless he is there even now.” And the tears gushed forth at the thought that she could never hope to join that loved circle again.

“Nay, little one, do not weep,” said Veronica, drawing the child caressingly toward her. “It may yet please the Lord to restore you to your home. Listen! I have a plan by which, if Providence favors us, we may both escape; and I will risk my life in the attempt, for I know that worse than death awaits me here as soon as it shall become known that I have embraced the Vaudois faith. Madame Borelli is about to give an entertainment; she is even now gone to Pignerol to make some purchases for it, and it is to take place three days hence. It will be a grand affair; the house will be full of guests, and the servants all employed in attendance upon them, or about the kitchen or banqueting-room—

Fanchette as well as the others—and we could not have a better opportunity for attempting our escape. You are not to be seen, as you have not yet Catholicized, and therefore madame is not certain of ever adopting you; and I will request permission to sit with you here, lest you should be lonely, and madame will grant it, because she wishes to have you watched, lest by any possibility you should escape.”

“But how shall we escape from the house or grounds without being seen?” asked Blanche, trembling with eagerness

“I have the key of the outer door of the tower which opens on that side of the house that will be farthest removed from the scene of festivity,” replied Veronica; “and I think, also, I can secure the key to a postern—madame’s private entrance to the grounds—by which we can gain the road leading to the heights; and if, as I strongly hope will be the case, our flight is not discovered for some hours, and we meet no enemy on the way, I think we may reach your father’s cottage in safety before morning.”

Blanche’s heart beat wildly at the very thought. “Oh,” she exclaimed, “how shall I wait for the time to come?”

“You must be calm, and very careful that nothing unusual in your looks or behavior shall excite the least suspicion, or all will be lost,” said Veronica, in a warning voice; “and it is our only chance; for Father Ignatius returns to-morrow.”

“It will be difficult to conceal my emotions,” said Blanche; “but the Lord will help me; and I shall be praying every moment that he will give success to our plan, if consistent with his holy will.”

"My poor prayers shall also ascend hourly to his throne," said Veronica.

"May we not confide in Fanchette?" asked Blanche. "I am convinced she has a strong and true affection for me."

"No, no, never! as you value your hope of escape," replied Veronica, earnestly. "She is a Catholic, and would certainly feel it her duty to betray us. Hark! she is coming even now. We must appear quite unconcerned. Ah, my little one, make haste and prepare for your walk," she added, in a lively tone, as Fanchette opened the door; "I am to be your companion this morning."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together."

SHAKESPEARE: *All's Well that Ends Well*.

THE evening of Madame Borelli's party had come; the reception-rooms were blazing with light and brilliant with beauty and fashion; a confused murmur of voices, and now and then a strain of music, penetrated to a dimly-lighted and distant bedroom, where two persons—a young, fair maiden and a little girl—sat silently side by side, their hearts beating wildly betwixt hope and fear.

Thus far Veronica's plans had prospered well; she had secured the key of the private entrance to the grounds, which was kept in a drawer in madame's

dressing-room, and seldom used even by herself,—never by any one else,—and had readily obtained the lady's permission to spend the evening with Blanche in that part of the house where the child usually slept.

"How very long the hours seem!" whispered Blanche. "I think I never knew time move so slowly."

"We have not much longer to wait," replied her companion, in the same low tone. "I think they are even now going into the banqueting-room; and this will be the best time for us, as all, both guests and servants, will be fully occupied with the business in hand."

As if by mutual consent, they fell upon their knees, each offering up a silent but most fervent prayer for God's blessing and protection in their perilous enterprise. Then, rising, with a whispered, "Come," Veronica seized Blanche's hand, and drew her quickly, but noiselessly, from the room.

They gained the tower without meeting any one,—entering it by a door opening from the same floor with that of the room they had just left. This door they closed and bolted behind them: they then pulled off their shoes, and, each enveloping her person from head to foot in a dark mantle provided beforehand by Veronica, they stole softly down the stairs to the outer door, which she unfastened, the key turning noiselessly in the lock; for she had taken the precaution to oil it carefully. Blanche stepped out first, Veronica after her, drawing the door to as cautiously as she had opened it, relocking it, and then dropping the key into a crevice behind the step. To each it seemed that her heart was beating audibly. For one moment they

stood silent and still as death, looking carefully this way and that, listening intently for sound of voice or footstep near at hand. But all was quiet, save the distant sound of the revelry going on in the farther end of the dwelling—which was very large—and not a creature seemed to be stirring in that part of the grounds they must traverse to reach the postern by which they hoped to make their exit from them.

“Come,” again whispered Veronica. And she glided rapidly forward, Blanche following, and both keeping as much as possible in the shadow of the shrubs and trees. There was no moon, and the stars gave so little light that the dark figures would not have been easily discerned by any person more than a few paces distant; and, meeting no one, they reached the gate in safety.

Here Veronica applied her key; but Blanche’s heart died within her, for being, as I have said, seldom used, it grated harshly in the lock, and the door creaked noisily on its rusty hinges.

“Quick, quick, little one!” whispered Veronica, hastily removing the key to the outside, and Blanche darted through, Veronica following, drawing the door to and relocking it. Then, throwing the key from her into the long grass, where it could not be readily seen, she seized the child’s hand again, and hurried her onward until they had gained the shelter of a clump of evergreens. Here they stood a moment, panting with haste and fear, and listening intently for any sound of pursuit: but there was none; and again they pressed forward, keeping always in the shadow of the trees and bushes, and moving at first slowly, to husband their strength, but gradually quickening their pace, until at length it became almost a run, yet now and

then pausing to take breath and listen for the dreaded pursuit they knew would be begun the moment their flight was discovered.

Thus they pressed on for a couple of hours; and now they were approaching scenes familiar to Blanche. She began to recognize the hamlets and cottages. They would soon reach the bridge over the torrent; and the child's heart thrilled with joy and thankfulness as, catching Veronica's hand and pressing it between her own, she panted out the words, "Oh, we are almost there! I shall soon be at home! shall soon see my mother—my dear, dear mother—whom I never thought to see again on earth!"

"Hist! what was that?" exclaimed Veronica, in a suppressed tone of intense excitement; and for an instant they stood still in the middle of the road, listening with bated breath for a repetition of the dull, thumping sound which had startled them. Again it smote upon the ear, this time more distinctly.

"We are pursued!" cried Veronica, in the same excited whisper. "This way, Blanche!" And, with a quick movement, she dragged the terrified child to the shelter of some bushes growing by the roadside, the only covert near at hand, where they crouched down, waiting in breathless silence and with fast-beating hearts for the coming of their pursuers.

The sounds drew nearer and nearer, and soon it was evident to the listening fugitives that they were the footsteps of two men, walking briskly up the road, and conversing in earnest though not very loud tones. At first the words were not distinguishable; but, as the speakers had almost reached that part of the road

directly in front of their hiding-place, a sentence or two came distinctly to their ears.

"Ah, yes, my brother, here we must walk by faith; but in another and better world we shall see and know why all these things were permitted. The Master himself said, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'"

Veronica's heart gave a joyful bound, for well she knew the speaker could be no Papist, and at the same instant Blanche cried, in a delighted though suppressed tone, "Oh, it is one of our own barbas! I know his voice." And, darting from her concealment, she threw herself directly in his path, asking, eagerly, "Barba Garnier, do you not know me? and will you help me to find my way home?"

"Why, child, where do you come from?" he asked, in a startled tone, as he and his companion came to a sudden halt. Then, taking her hand kindly in his, "Know you, little one?" he said. "It is almost too dark to see your features, but the voice, I think, is familiar. Tell me your name."

"Blanche Romano," she answered; and both he and his companion uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

"Ah, my child, has the good God and Father of us all enabled you to escape from your persecutors?" asked the barba, with emotion. "Your parents have long mourned you and your baby brother as more lost to them than if they had seen you laid in the grave. How will their hearts be made to rejoice this night at your restoration! And here——"

He had turned toward his companion, but a warning

touch from the latter caused him to suddenly break off his sentence, leaving it unfinished.

Veronica had now come to Blanche's side.

"This," said the child, laying her hand on the young maiden's arm, "is my friend, who helped me to escape, and has come with me ; for she too is a Vaudois, stolen from her parents in infancy, and is now returning to the faith and home of her fathers."

"You will be very kindly welcomed to all we poor persecuted folk have to offer, my dear child, whether any of your relatives are now living or not," said the barba, taking Veronica's hand in his. "But let us hasten," he added, moving on ; "for you may be pursued, and every moment is precious."

"You seem weary and spent, little one ; let me carry you," said the stranger, a tall, powerful man ; and, taking Blanche in his arms, he bore her onward with eager, rapid strides, while the Barba Garnier, giving Veronica the support of his, closely followed in his footsteps.

Blanche clasped her arms tightly about the neck of her bearer ; and he could feel her slight frame trembling with emotion as they crossed the torrent and slowly ascended the hill upon which her native hamlet stood.

In Hubert's cottage all are wrapped in slumber, and Madalena is dreaming ; once again she sees the sweet face of her Blanche close at her side, and clasps her darling baby boy in her arms, pressing him to her bosom in a transport of joy—then wakes and weeps to find it but a dream ; weeps until her pillow is all wet with tears. It is long past midnight ; her husband lies sleeping by her side ; and no sound breaks the stillness, save his heavy breathing. But, hark ! there is a

slight noise without, a footstep upon the porch, and surely she hears voices conversing in tones scarcely raised above a whisper. Hastily she steals from the bed, throws on her clothes, and, as a low knock reaches her ear, she hurriedly strikes a light, and, going to the door, asks, softly, "Who is there?"

She would not wake her husband or call Louis; for they had had a long tramp that day, across the valley and over the mountains, and she knew they were very weary.

"It is I, the Barba Garnier," replied a well-known voice; and, with a low exclamation of joy, she set down her light and quickly unbarred the door.

"You are ever welcome, thrice welcome, to our humble home, Barba Garnier," she said, giving him her hand, as he stepped over the threshold. "But you come not alone? I surely heard voices in converse with you."

"I am not alone," he said. "Madalena, the Lord who looseth the bonds of the prisoner, and lets the captive go free, has been very good to you this night. Can you bear joy, my friend?"

Madalena trembled and gasped for breath; but, ere she had time to reply, Blanche's arms were about her neck, Blanche's face was hid on her bosom; while the dear voice sobbed out, "Mother, mother, dear mother, I have come home at last. God has brought me back to you."

"My child, my child! Thank God! thank God!" was all the mother could say, as she strained her to her heart and wept over her with a joy that seemed akin to grief,—a joy too deep for anything but tears. "But my baby, my darling baby boy!" she suddenly

exclaimed, glancing from the child to the Barba Garnier and back again. "O Blanche, where is your little brother? Have you not brought him with you?"

"Mother," said Blanche, softly, "he is safe. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has gathered the dear lamb into his own bosom."

The mother groaned and wept. "Oh, my baby! my baby!" she cried, through gushing tears and bitter, bursting sobs; "shall I, then, never again look upon your sweet face on earth? never clasp you to my breast? Oh, my darling, my little one!"

"Mother," whispered Blanche, "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

"Ah, yes," she replied; "my little lamb is safe—safe from sin and sorrow and suffering; thank God for that! I need fear nothing for him now."

Veronica and the stranger were quite forgotten by Blanche; and Madalena had as yet no eyes for any one but her long-lost darling. They had, however, entered immediately behind Blanche, and while Veronica, sinking upon a seat, wept in sympathy with the mother and child, the stranger stood leaning against the wall, gazing upon the scene with moistened eye and heaving breast. But as Hubert, roused by the sound of their voices and of Madalena's weeping, at this moment entered the room, and Blanche, leaving her mother, sprang into his arms with a cry of joy, Madalena heard her own name uttered by the stranger in tremulous tones, and, turning a startled look upon him, she gazed searchingly into his face for a single instant, then with a wild cry, "It is—it is my brother,

my brother !” flung herself upon his breast, while he opened his arms to receive her, and, clasping her close and closer, mingled his tears with hers, kissing her forehead, her cheeks, her lips, her hair, murmuring, in tones of deep tenderness, “My beloved sister, my Madalena. Thank the Lord that he has restored us to each other !” Then, as she raised her head to look again upon his face, “Where is my darling Aline ?” he asked. “I long to clasp her also to my breast.”

At first Madalena answered only with bitter weeping ; that only darling sister could not be remembered even yet without tears, and never had her loss seemed heavier than now, when he, the brother they had together mourned so long, had so unexpectedly returned ; then, taking his hand, she led him into an adjoining bedroom, and pointing to a lovely, sleeping boy, the outlines of whose delicate features were just visible by the light streaming in through the open door, “There, my brother,” she said, “is all that now remains to us of our beloved sister.”

He bowed his head and wept in anguish, then, stooping, pressed a kiss on the boy’s fair brow, and turned away with a heavy sigh ; for during all those long years of captivity earth had held none dearer to his heart than the little sister, who ever after the death of their parents had clung so fondly to him, as her only earthly protector ; and he had heard not one word of all that had befallen her since the sad day in which he was torn from home and kindred. He had fallen in with the Barba Garnier but a few moments before meeting Blanche ; and all their talk had been of Madalena and her little flock, and of what he himself had endured.

"Let us not weep for her, dear brother," whispered Madalena, again winding her arms about his neck: "she sleeps in Jesus, and 'them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.' When you hear the sad story of her sufferings, you will rejoice and thank God with me that she is 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest.'"

"Nay, I weep not for her, but for myself," he replied; "but, blessed be God, though she cannot return to me, I shall one day go to her."

But Blanche's voice was heard speaking in earnest tones in the next room, and the mother could no longer remain away from her so lately-recovered treasure. She moved eagerly toward the open door, drawing her brother with her. They found Barbara, Louis, Paul, and Philip all there, and all, with Hubert and the Barba Garnier also, gathered in a circle about Blanche and Veronica, the latter of whom the little girl was introducing to them as the person through whose instrumentality she had just escaped from her captors. Hubert expressed his gratitude to Veronica and to God, in deep, tremulous tones, as he again folded his beloved daughter to his heart; and Madalena, taking Veronica's hand, kissed and embraced her tenderly, praying God to bless her and return to her a thousand-fold the kindness she had shown to them.

Then, turning to her husband, "Ah, Hubert," she said, "what a night is this! Here is my beloved, long-lost brother Hugo, just liberated from the galleys, and restored to us at the same time with our darling child."

Hubert, who had been gazing earnestly upon the stranger, started forward with an exclamation of glad

surprise, and the two embraced with brotherly affection. There was a joyful greeting all around, and then the Barba Garnier, saying, "Let us, my friends, return our hearty thanks unto God, who hath done such great things for us, whereof we are glad," fell upon his knees, all the others imitating his example, and poured out a fervent prayer filled with praise and thanksgiving for the restoration of the loved and lost, and asking for the Lord's blessing upon themselves and their beloved Zion, that, if it were his will, she might speedily be delivered from all persecutors and oppressors.

There was much to hear, and much to tell,—far more than could be related in a brief hour or two. Hugo Vernoux, Madalena's brother, had learned nothing during his absence of all that was occurring in the valleys; nor had he ever been heard from; and every one was now eager for his story, and also for those of Blanche and Veronica. He had been in the galleys all these years, he said, and had just worked out his time and obtained his release. He had suffered greatly at first, but for the last two years had been treated with much less rigor, through the favor of his master, whose life he had once saved at the risk of his own. But the remainder of his story he would reserve for another time, as he too was anxious to hear what Blanche and Veronica had to tell of their sufferings and escape.

Veronica insisted that the little girl should speak first; and she, seated between her parents, each fondly clasping one of her little hands, told her tale to the deeply-interested listeners. She told it simply, without any embellishment, touching very lightly on her suffer-

ings and her steadfastness under them, and ascribing it all to the sustaining grace of God. When she spoke of the white-robed figure which had come to her that first night spent in the chapel, Veronica, interrupting her, asked if she believed it to have been a ghost.

"Oh, no," said Blanche, "I knew it could not be a spirit: yet it frightened me; but afterwards I thought the voice, though disguised, was familiar; and I was almost convinced that you, Veronica, were yourself the ghost. Was it not so?"

"It was," she said, blushing deeply. "I now own with shame that I lent myself, at the priest's command, to the work of frightening you—a helpless little child—out of your so-called heresies. And the foul fiend, who afterwards met you and claimed you as his, body and soul, was no other than Father Ignatius himself."*

"I have suspected it," said Blanche, "although I did not recognize his voice; but I knew that who or whatever he might be—fiend or man—he could not touch my soul, because it is, and will ever be, safe in the hands of the Lord Jesus, who is stronger than all the devils in hell."

When Blanche had finished, all asked for Veronica's story.

"I have but little to tell," she said, sadly sighing. "I know not even my own true name—though I fancy I should recognize it if I heard it spoken:—but I was a mere infant, when one day, while out walking in charge of a young girl,—my mother's sister,—we were

* Tricks such as these are but a part of the ordinary machinery of Popery in those countries where she is dominant.

surprised and carried off by some monks. My aunt was thrown into a convent, where, as I have reason to believe, she died in a dungeon, adhering firmly to the faith of the gospel; while I was brought up as a pet and plaything in the family of Madame Borelli's parents,—becoming her humble companion, when grown,—being trained to believe all the errors of Popery, and knowing no better until God sent that dear child to teach me.”

Madalena, who had given a sudden start at Veronica's mention of the manner in which she had been stolen from her parents, and had since been gazing searchingly into the young girl's face, now laid her hand on her arm, saying, “Your face resembles that of a dear friend, now in heaven, who lost a child in the manner you describe. You think you would know your true name if you heard it. Was it Anna Ter-bano?”

“It was! it was! I thought I should remember it if I could but hear it again!” exclaimed Veronica, starting up in great excitement. “And you, then, knew my parents? Oh, tell me of them!”

“Your mother, when I knew her, was living on the heights of Angrogna, with her parents,—an aged and infirm couple,” replied Madalena; “and both she and they perished in the massacre of April 24, 1655. But it is possible your father may be living now: he had been sent to the galleys some years before, and nothing heard of him afterward. Your mother's elder brother was also sent there at the same time, and the younger one was killed in attempting to rescue you and your aunt from the monks who were carrying you off.”

"Then I am indeed alone in the wide world," said Veronica, sinking back in her seat, and pressing her hands to her breast, with a deep-drawn sigh. "For, even should my father or uncle be living, it is very unlikely we will ever meet again."

"But do not think yourself alone: be assured you will never be without friends while we live," said Madalena, taking her hand and pressing it in both her own.

"That you will not, indeed," said Barbara and Hubert both. And the Barba Garnier added, "You will find brethren and sisters, my child, in every Vaudois hamlet and cottage. Did not the Master say, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another'?"

"Hark!" whispered Paul. "I thought I heard a step. Father, are Veronica and Blanche safe even here?"

"For to-night, I think, my son," he answered,— "Blanche, indeed, I hope, as long as we keep her in our sight. But, Veronica, I would advise you to flee without delay to one of the Protestant Swiss Cantons; for you will not be safe here. Alas! none of us are quite that, humanly speaking; but you have been a member of the Church of Rome, and you know how terrible are the punishments she visits upon those who forsake her communion."

"I do, indeed," said Veronica. "It is my most earnest desire to fly to some Protestant country as soon as possible; and, if you will direct me how to do so, I will be very grateful."

"We are all ready to assist you to the utmost of our power," replied Hubert, to which all the others cordially assented.

A consultation was then held, and it was decided that, as day was now dawning, and Veronica already much fatigued, she should remain concealed in a cave near the cottage until nightfall, when Hubert should guide her to Perosa and there make arrangements for her journey thence into Switzerland, the Barba Garnier providing her with a letter of introduction to one of the Protestant pastors there.

While this conversation was going on, Barbara and Madalena were busied in preparing the morning meal, and Blanche, Philip, and Paul roused the three little ones and helped them to dress. Great was their surprise and joy at the sight of Blanche, and a thankful company was it that gathered about the breakfast-table. It was a time of strangely mingled emotions—each bosom swelling by turns with overwhelming joy, deep, heartfelt sorrow, and intense thankfulness. They sat down, and the Barba Garnier craved God's blessing upon their food; then the form of eating was gone through with, but little more, for excitement had taken away the appetites of all. Ere many minutes, they rose from the table, and Louis hurried Veronica away to her cave, for it was fast growing light, and further delay might be dangerous. Here she rested through the day, and that night Hubert conducted her to Perosa, where he gave her in charge to a friend about to journey to Switzerland; and some time afterward news reached Casella of her safe arrival at her destination.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Then had the churches rest."—Acts, ix. 31.

THE amnesty of which Veronica had told Blanche, though causing a cessation of hostilities, had left the Waldenses still in a very oppressed condition. No public worship was yet allowed to Protestants in San Giovanni, nor might a pastor reside there; he might come twice a year to visit his people, and might also visit the sick, but was forbidden to hold any religious meeting, or even to pass the night there, except in case of absolute necessity. The persecuted folk were also required to rebuild the Popish churches destroyed during the war, and to sacrifice the last wreck of their fortunes in indemnifying the Papists for the expenses of the barbarities committed upon themselves.

But it would require a large volume to tell of all they were called to endure. They could not accept the preposterous conditions offered; and, various foreign powers interceding for them, the matter was protracted from month to month and from year to year, until, in 1670, the duke modifying his demands, and granting new privileges, he and they came at last to a good understanding, and for a time the churches of the valleys were blessed with comparative prosperity.

It was a lovely morning in the early summer-time. The whole hamlet wore an air of festivity, for all its inhabitants were in their holiday garb, all the cottages were carefully set in order, and Hubert's and the one

next to it—where Ursula had formerly lived—were tastefully ornamented with a profusion of evergreens and wild flowers; while underneath the trees, between the two houses, a long table was spread, and several of the neighbor women were busily engaged in assisting Madalena to garnish it also with flowers, and to set out upon it a simple repast of cakes, bread, milk, chestnuts, and fruit.

“There! I think our work is now quite finished,” remarked one of them, at length, as she set down a large dish of beautiful ripe cherries; “and very pretty and inviting it looks, too; the strawberries and cherries never were finer than they are this year. But come,” she added; “let us go out upon the brow of the hill yonder, and see if the wedding-party is yet in sight.”

“Agreed,” said Madalena; “but first come with me and look at the new home of our Louis and Magdalen; I think it looks as if it may not be impossible to find happiness there, if the blessing of the Lord be with them, as I truly believe it will.”

“Yes, the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it,” replied the others, following to what had been Ursula’s home. She had lingered a year or two after her fall down the hill, but never recovered from its effects; and upon her death her children had scattered, and the cottage had since remained tenantless, but now was to become the home of Louis Masson and his bride, Magdalen Orselli, the eldest daughter of the former owner, to whom Louis had long been engaged.

“See!” said Madalena, throwing open the door. “Is it not improved? Does it not look sweet and tasteful?”

Louis has taken much pains and trouble to prepare it for his little wife."

"It does credit to his taste and skill," said one.

"And Magdalen will keep it neat as wax," said another.

"I hope the Lord may give them many years of wedded happiness within its walls," remarked a third.

"But it is almost time they had returned," said the first speaker; "and now let us repair to the brow of the hill and watch for their coming." And, nothing loth, they went.

It was a lovely panorama that lay outspread at their feet as they stood there. Green fields, studded with flowers, groves of chestnut, olive, and fig trees, orchards and vineyards, velvety meadows of emerald hue, with here and there little dancing streams that wound about like shining threads of silver amid the grass and flowers; while hamlets, farm-houses, and cottages were scattered over the verdant plain and on the slopes of the hills; and towering above them all were the lofty mountains.

"Can there be another spot in the wide world as lovely as our own beloved valleys?" murmured Madalena, as with moistened eyes she gazed upon this scene. "Surely the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places; the Lord hath given us a goodly heritage."

"Yes," said one of the others; "and how undeserving are we of all his mercies! how ready to murmur and repine!"

"The Lord seems at length to have given our churches rest," said another. "Oh, may we repent and give ourselves more fully to him, that his chastisements be not again sent upon us!"

With such pious discourse they beguiled the time, until the bridal party was seen approaching from the direction of the church, where the marriage ceremony had just been performed. Louis joyfully conducted his bride to her new home, where Barbara and Madalena met and welcomed her as she crossed the threshold.

She returned Barbara's embrace with reverent affection, then, throwing her arms round Madalena's neck, whispered, "May I too call you mother, as Louis does?"

"You may, indeed; and you will be a beloved daughter to me, my sweet Magdalen," replied Madalena, folding her to her heart.

"And if you claim my mother, dear Magdalen, remember that I must be your sister," said Blanche, who, as bridesmaid, had entered close behind the bride.

"Yes, Blanche, and we will be truly kind and affectionate—as sisters should be," replied Magdalen, smiling at Philip, on whose arm Blanche, now a lovely young girl of fifteen, was leaning.

Philip pressed the little hand that rested on his arm, and, glancing with ardent affection at the sweet face of its owner, longed to be as old as Louis. But Blanche, to whom as yet Philip was only a dear brother, saw not the look; for she was listening to the kind wishes and congratulations bestowed by other friends upon the newly-married pair.

There were none but Waldenses in Casella now; and they lived together in such love and harmony that they seemed to compose but one large family.

And now they gathered about the table; the minister, who had united the young couple, asked God's

blessing upon their food, and the feast began. It was a festive scene; and there were plenty of pleasant smiles, and cheerful chat, and many expressions of gratitude to the Giver of all good for the blessings that surrounded them. Yet theirs was but a subdued joy, at times tinged with deep sadness; for, small as the assemblage was, there were more than one or two present who had some near and dear relative languishing in the dungeons of the Inquisition, or toiling at the oar as a galley-slave; while others could tell of parent or child, or husband or wife, murdered in cold blood before their very eyes, or carried off they knew not whither.

Daniel Ghardet was there, with his two daughters, young and lovely girls, seated near him; yet, even while gazing upon them with all a father's joy and pride, he felt his heart torn with anguish at the thought of his beloved Henri and Lucille, perhaps even now pining in some dark, dismal dungeon, or enduring tortures worse than death, "not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection," or—most harrowing thought of all—espousing the erroneous belief and engaging in the idolatrous practices of Rome. Nor were his murdered wife and little ones forgotten; but for them he could rejoice, that they beheld the face of their Redeemer and were forever done with all earth's sins and sorrows.

Madalena and her brother recalled, with a subdued sadness, the memory of their martyred ones; and even Louis—happy, rejoicing bridegroom though he was—remembered his dear ones slain, and thought, with a sigh, how proud he would have been to give to his

parents such a daughter as his sweet Magdalen, and how they would all have loved one another.

And while each thus thought of his own loved ones in particular, all alike regretted the absence of their beloved pastor Leger, and their noble and courageous leader Gianavel, who, excepted from the amnesty, had been compelled to flee from his native land, and had taken refuge in Geneva.

But, though there was much sorrow in their hearts, joy and gratitude predominated, because of the rest from persecution now granted them, and the knowledge that their future was altogether in the hands of that God whom they loved and served, and whose love for them was infinite and everlasting; and so "they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

When all had finished, Daniel Girardet returned thanks to their heavenly Father for the bountiful supply of their wants, and then Hubert dismissed the assembly with a short address.

"My friends," he said, "my heart is filled with thankfulness this day for all the great and undeserved goodness of God toward us. What a beautiful land is this that he has given to us and to our forefathers! a land flowing with milk and honey, and now no longer desolated by the scourge of war: who would exchange it, with its beautiful and fruitful valleys and its glorious mountains, for any other land upon the face of the whole earth? And is not the Bible—is not this pure faith of the gospel, handed down to us from father to son since the age of the apostles—a still greater and more precious boon? And now have the churches rest; and, though we know not how soon the flames of persecution may again burst forth, we do

know that our God will be with us in the future, as he has been in the past, and will bring us out of the furnace as gold tried in the fire. Yes, my friends, we have this day great and abundant reason for gratitude to God, our Creator. Preserver, and bountiful Benefactor." And, raising his eyes and his clasped hands to heaven, he exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting, and to everlasting. **Amen, and Amen!**"

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

"A girl of Bubiana was carried off by the monks. Her brother, who hastened to her assistance, was slain; and the girl herself, taken off to Turin, was never afterwards heard of by her friends."—MUSTON: *Israel of the Alps*, p. 126.

NOTE B.

Is the reader inclined to suspect me of exaggerating the horrors of this massacre? Let me give him an extract from Muston's description, in his "Israel of the Alps," which I find on pages 138-41 of Hazlitt's translation.

"To give an adequate idea of the horrors that ensued, one's eye must, at a single glance, comprehend the entire valley, take in each house, each room, view every act of death and torment, distinguish, amid the immense voice of aggregate anguish and desolation, each particular cry of destroyed honor, of parting existence. Literally, indeed, did the unhappy Vaudois suffer the things of which the apostle speaks; 'They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.'

"'Young children,' writes Leger, 'were torn from their mothers' arms, dashed against the rocks, and their mangled remains cast on the road. Sick persons and old people, men and women, were burned alive in their houses, or hacked in

pieces, or mutilated in horrible ways, or flayed alive, or exposed, bound and dying, to the sun's noontide heat, or to ferocious animals; some were stripped naked, bound up in the form of a ball, the head forced down between the legs, and then rolled over precipices; some of these poor creatures, torn and mangled by the rocks, but stayed in their downward progress by the branch of a tree, or other prominence, were seen forty-eight hours after, still lingering in all the torments of pain and famine.

“Women and girls, after being fearfully outraged, were impaled on pikes, and so left to die, planted at angles of the road; or they were buried alive; or, impaled as above, they were roasted before a slow fire, and their burning bodies cut in slices by these *soldiers of the faith* as by cannibals. After the massacre, such children as survived and could be seized were carried off, and cast, like lambs into a slaughter-house, into the monasteries and convents, and private abodes of the Propagandists. Next after massacre and abduction came incendiarism; monks, and priests, and other zealous Propagandists, went about with lighted torches and projectiles, burning down the houses previously ensanguined by the soldiers with the blood of their owners and their families.’

“The terrible narrative given by Leger of these atrocities was prepared by him from the testimony of eye-witnesses, who gave their depositions before two notaries, who accompanied him from commune to commune for that purpose. The pen, he says, well-nigh fell from his hand as he transcribed the horrible details. Here, a father had seen his children cut in pieces by the sword, or absolutely torn limb from limb by four soldiers; there, the mother had seen her daughter cruelly massacred before her face, after having been as cruelly outraged; here, the sister had seen her brother's mouth filled with gunpowder, and the head then blown to atoms; there, the husband had seen his wife, about to become a mother, treated in a manner which it would outrage humanity to describe. Of these, the eyes were torn from the head; of those, the nails from the fingers; some were tied to trees, their heart and lungs were cut from them.

and they were thus left to die in anguish. The universal conflagration of the Waldensian houses succeeded the massacre of their inhabitants. In several communes, not a single cottage was left standing; so that this fair valley of Luserna, as Leger expresses it, resembled a burning furnace, whence cries, fewer and fainter, attested that a people had lived.

"All these victims might have lived had they consented to abjure their faith. Some, who were saved from immediate death, were thrown into prison, and there subjected to continuous torturings to compel them to apostasy. James and David Prins, of Baudena, near Villar, were taken to the prison of Luserna; and there, having resisted the utmost solicitations of the priests, their arms, from the shoulder to the elbow, were first flayed in strips, which, the upper end remaining uncut, floated on the living flesh beneath; then the arms, from the elbow to the hand, were flayed in like manner; then the thighs to the knee, and then the legs from the knees to the soles of the feet; and in this condition they were left to die. These Prins were two of a family of six brothers, who, having married six sisters, lived with their families all together on one farm, having no separation of goods, but each having his particular task, some in the vineyards, some in the cattle-yard; and all the forty persons, of whom this combined family consisted, living together without the least discord, the eldest brother and sister being, as it were, father and mother to the rest. Yet these scenes, so patriarchal, so pure, so touching, so simple, so Christian, were made a prey to the demon of Popery, cruel in its superstition beyond the cruelty of the most barbarous savages.

"A farm-servant of Bobbi, refusing to apostatize, had the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet pierced with dagger-thrusts; he was then barbarously mutilated, and suspended over a fire, in order that the flame might stay the effusion of blood. Next, his nails were torn from his fingers with pincers; and, as he still adhered to his religion, he was then tied by the feet to the tail of a mule, and so dragged through the streets of Luserna. Seeing him now at the point of death, his executioners tied a cord so tight round his head that the

eyes and the brain were forced out; and the mangled carcass was then thrown into the river.

"So monstrous were the cruelties with which the work of extermination was accompanied, that several even of the officers who had been appointed to execute it were struck with horror, and resigned their commands rather than fulfill their orders."

NOTE C.

I have not been able to find anywhere a description of the abbey of Pignerol; but that its monks were zealous persecutors of the Waldenses is attested by more than one authority, and Beattie tells us that there the Inquisition could hold a convenient tribunal; and I have thought myself very safe in putting dungeons, etc. underneath any such Popish prison-house. It may seem to some unlikely that a wife would be admitted to the dungeon where her husband was confined; but in William Jones's History of the Waldenses I find an account of one Copin, whose wife was permitted to visit him in his dungeon, in the hope that she would influence him to recant.

NOTE D.

Muston, speaking of the Propagandists, says, "All the Vaudois children whom they could abstract from their parents' houses were considered by these misguided zealots as so many innocents rescued from the jaws of perdition; the greatest sacrifices were incurred, the vengeance of man and the decrees of the laws alike braved, in the abduction of these children, who were then placed with rich Catholic families, who undertook their maintenance, or in convents, which undertook to wean them gradually from the world, from their country, from the pure affections of the heart, and from the biblical faith, natural and revealed law being alike scorned by the barbarous spirit of Catholicism."

NOTE E.

Should it strike any reader as improbable that a child of Blanche's age—nine or ten—would be able thus to refute the arguments of her persecutors, I would simply say that the Waldenses instructed their children *very carefully* in the truths of their religion, and that their knowledge of Scripture was remarkable. And I think these parents, knowing that their offspring were constantly liable to be stolen from them by the Papists, and dreading for them, as an evil far worse than death, a belief of the errors of Popery, would teach them with the greatest care those passages of Holy Writ which most plainly condemn its false doctrines and idolatrous practices. Blanche, too, was naturally a thoughtful child; and surely those were times whose tendency must have been to make the young thoughtful beyond their years; and with such a pastor as Leger, such a grandmother as Barbara, and such parents as Hubert and Madalena, she could hardly fail to be well indoctrinated. Nor should we leave out of the account the teachings of the Spirit, a far better than any earthly instructor; and her answers are given almost always in the language of either the Bible or the catechism in which Vaudois children and youth were instructed. Also, in Beattie's work on the Waldenses, I find an authentic account of a bright, intelligent child of *seven*, who, having been thoroughly grounded by her pastor in the principles of the Vaudois creed, was able to resist for a long time all the arguments and persuasions, not merely of her Popish playmates, but also of older persons, employed in the work of *converting Vaudois children*, and of the priest.

This **BOOK** may be kept out **TWO WEEKS ONLY**, and is subject to a fine of **FIVE CENTS** a day thereafter. It is **DUE** on the **DAY** indicated below:

--	--	--

